1-1-1977

The school as family system : a conceptual model for analyzing alternative education using family systems theory.

Laurie Jean Klapper
University of Massachusetts Amherst

THE SCHOOL AS FAMILY SYSTEM:

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR ANALYZING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION USING FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

A Dissertation Presented

By

Laurie J. Klapper

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1977

THE SCHOOL AS FAMILY SYSTEM:

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR ANALYZING ALTERNATIVE

EDUCATION USING FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

A Dissertation Presented

By

Laurie J. Klapper

Approved as to style and content by:

Dr. Jack Hruska, Chairperson

Dr. Lynne Miller, Member

Dr. Harold Jarmon, Member

Mario D. Fantini, Dean
School of Education

DEDICATION

To my mother, Dr. Zelda Sobel Klapper (1922-1974), who provided me with a profound model of living which combined the integrity of an active social conscience, scholarliness, and the warmth and humor of family life.

And to my husband, Dr. Sigmund Van Raan, who provided a continuous supply of imspiration and support, and enriched my appreciation of family by introducing me to family process theory while making the new formation of our own family together a joyous experience.

ABSTRACT

The School as Family System: A Conceptual Model for Analyzing Alternative Education Using Family Systems Theory (May 1977)

LAURIE J. KLAPPER

Directed by: Dr. Jack Hruska

In this study a conceptual framework based on family systems theory is developed and applied to an analysis of alternative education. A model for describing alternative schools is posited. The relationship between the transactional dynamics of family systems and the transactional dynamics of alternative educational systems is studied. A specific type of alternative school, including a definite ideology and mission is described as the prototype for this study. Examples from one such alternative school are referred to within the description of the model.

The focus of the study is three-fold. First, the conceptual framework for the study is developed, using literature in the field of family therapy. Four principle theoreticians are studied: Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, Murray Bowen, Salvador Minuchin, and Helm Stierlin. Salient theories and similarities and differences among them are discussed in terms of: the family as a system, the family therapeutic process, concepts of health and pathology, and the family of the adolescent and the separation process.

Secondly, using the conceptual framework, a model for describing alternative educational process is posited. Characteristics of the alternative school as family system are presented in terms of six applications. The alternative school's therapeutic process, concepts of health and pathology in the alternative school, and the separation process in the alternative school of the adolescent are described in terms of six additional applications. A case example, the King Philip School, is referred to in order to further clarify and demonstrate the twelve applications. Those retrospective examples from an actual alternative school for adolescents were drawn from the author's experience as participant-conceptualizer and director of the school for two years. The twelve applications of the theory to the model demonstrate the congruence between the dynamics operant in a family system and those in an alternative school.

Thirdly, the findings are summarized and translated into suggestions for practice. It is suggested that the study provides useful information and direction for practitioners in and consultants to alternative organizations, those involved as change agents in more traditional organizations, and family therapists. General implications for practice, as well as specific suggestions for alternative schools are presented. Directions for future research are offered. A principle suggestion postulates the need for an expansion of this study to include the effect an economic system has on the quality of family life and schooling within that society. Further directions for research focus on both the applicability of this study's findings to other organizations and the need for longitudinal, intensive studies of the model presented here.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Assumptions of Author

Every study contains value judgments, either implicitly or explicitly. The choice of subject matter to be studied, the selection and organization of applicable material, and finally the findings and conclusions drawn from the study reflect a particular belief system. The concerns discussed in this study are necessarily an outgrowth of certain life experiences and an expression of a system of values and expectations. The purpose of this section is to briefly delineate those assumptions which pertain to this specific study.

The problem which this study addresses is the need for a compatible framework and vocabulary with which to describe, develop and improve the dynamic process underlying alternative schools. Studies on alternative schools, typically, focus on such single content issues as curriculum, governance, community relations or teaching strategies. This study presents a way of looking at the dynamics of the total process: those transactional dynamics which influence and tie together all the isolated content issues. Family systems theory is developed and used in this study as the framework for describing alternative education.

The focus of this study is alternative education, conceptualized in terms of family systems theory. The author was director of an alternative school

which serves as a case example. The author's decision to work in and examine an alternative institution is a conscious choice. It reflects an interest in and commitment to those institutions involved in radical social change as differentiated from those which in one way or another perpetuate the status quo. The specific interest in alternative education comes from seeing the American public educational system as a primary institution of socialization which actively educates people towards complacency and an acceptance of the status quo: the economy, institutions and class structure of a capitalist society. The educational system does not foster social mobility; it reinforces the already present patterns of social stratification.[1] As Edgar Z. Friedenberg states, "The bias of the educational system against the poor is structural and pervasive, rather than the consequence of a defect in its operation that remains uncorrected after more than a century."[2] Therefore, there is a resultant need for an alternative to that public education system which would undermine, rather than reinforce, the existing economic and social order.

The term "alternative" is generally (not in this case) used to mean many different things, especially when applied to education. The label "alternative school" has been used to refer to, among others, schools with authoritarian structures emphasizing dress codes, patriotism and corporal punishment, innovative classrooms within the traditional public school system, and country communes with loosely applied Summerhillian perspectives. Although it is important to distinguish one alternative from another, attempts at differentiating

among them have been meager. Some authors distinguish these schools by location of the building and facilities and materials offered,[3] while others distinguish them by the teaching methods used.[4] Some educators make distinctions in terms of social mission.[5] It is this latter grouping of schools that is of interest to this study. The following excerpt from an article by Terry McDonough distinguishes between two such groups of schools.

> What is an 'alternative school or program? The question is not so much one of alternative to what but alternative within what. If an alternative school or program defines itself as an alternative within the present economic, political and social system, it must then of necessity serve the system. Since schools and educational programs do not drop from the sky, they have to have some rationale, some reason for existence. These schools and programs must help the society of which they are a self-defined part (either explicitly or implicitly). This help can take the form of just plain perpetuating the society or of attempting to reform society in order that it may run more smoothly. Such schools and programs exist as an alternative to public schools. Yet the role they play within the larger society is not alternative at all, but one more strategy of the system as it seeks to perpetuate and adapt itself.
>
> The other option an alternative school or program has is to see itself as an integral part of a radically new society, fundamentally different than the one in which we now live. This new society would eliminate the outrageous inequality of income and poverty which the present American economic system makes inevitable. The society would return democratic control of America to the American people, control of both the economy upon which we depend and the government which was meant to do our bidding rather than that of giant corporate interests. The truly alternative schools would relate to this new society on several different levels. In a visionary way it would see itself as an actual part of the new society born before its time. Within a farsighted strategy it would propose to be a

> model for the kind of education a new society would struggle to build. The alternative school would take its position as role model very seriously, and for this reason would constantly struggle to improve its operations. In a more immediate practical way, the school program would enter into the struggle to bring about the new society. It would join in an active and aggressive way, using whatever means it had at its disposal. Such a school would be alternative in its vision of a new society, its view of itself, and the forms of its practical work. It would not be merely different from regular public school.[6]

The above distinction, with only minor qualifications, can be applied to an analysis of the differences among alternative institutions of any type. The important characteristic differentiating these two kinds of alternatives is the type of relationship each one has to the social and economic order of the society within which it exists. One type of alternative operates within the guidelines of society, either indirectly or actively accepting its value structure and norms. The other purposefully examines the ramifications of that value structure and using that analysis seeks to envision and work towards a new economic and social order which would more equally distribute wealth and power among its people, thereby creating less alienated human relationships and less oppressive work situations. For the purposes of this study, the latter type is the one being discussed.

This is not to say that restructuring any one institutional system (such as the public education system) will result in a new society. There is no one societal institution which when significantly altered could drastically change the structure of society. That is, the body of thought subscribed to in this

study assumes that societal institutions, the quality of life, human relationships and work options are all extensions of an economic system. A capitalist economy, for instance, necessarily creates a class society in which: there is always a large segment of people in poverty; control is in the hands of a small elite; human relationships and work relationships are alienated; societal institutions are unresponsive to human needs and aspirations. The only unequivocal changes in the social order come from the establishment of a new economic order.[7]

There is no way to attempt to change an economic system. All its various institutions support it. The goals and tools of the educational system, for example, are merely epiphenomena of the more profound types of societal injustices which it is the role of the school system to reinforce. As John Holt states: "one of the primary purposes of schools (is) to make a society of inherited class look like a meritocracy. In short, to persuade society's losers and their children that the reason they are losing is not that the cards have been stacked against them, but that they are inferior and deserve to lose. By such means, an unjust social order is preserved".[8] Each alternative institution which envisions, ultimately, a change in the economic system has an influence on that system (e.g., an alternative school which accepts this vision is radically educating young people, some of whom as a result will also participate in racial social change in whatever they choose to do; the alternative school also serves as inspiration and proof of the feasibility of alternatives). In itself an alternative school doesn't necessarily constitute a particular threat to the social order, but

in conjunction with many other alternative institutions it can have a greater cumulative effect in its ability to both offer alternative models of organization and to empower and politicize individuals. In this study alternative educational institutions are looked at in terms of their potential for facilitating radical individual and social change. Thus, an analysis of the structure and function of such institutions is viewed in that context.

Statement of Problem

Human services are scarce and not widely available. Those that do exist often do not serve the people who most need them. These factors, coupled with an ever-expanding bureaucracy and the resulting lack of responsiveness of these services, have created the need for alternatives. Within the past ten or twenty years professionals and non-professionals, individually and collectively, have created alternative institutions to more adequately and with less expense provide decent services in many needed areas, such as social services, medicine, education, communications, and recreation.[8] Some of these alternative services see themselves as supportive of, or at least not in conflict with, the larger social structure. Others see themselves as change agents, working towards the creation of a new, more egalitarian and progressive society. It is the latter group which is of interest to this study.

Such alternative institutions often have well-formulated ideologies and sophisticated political perspectives. However, as with any institution, there

are areas of confusion and ways in which their day to day operations do not reflect their ideology. Particularly when the problem is in the area of process and not content, it is manifested by uncomfortable or antagonistic relationships and interactions among the people staffing and among those served by these organizations. This can often create anything from a vague feeling of unease through overt hostility and antagonism.

When it becomes evident that there is an internal conflictual situation demanding attention, those in charge of traditional and alternative organizations have a number of options including: ignoring the problem (because the quality of relationships is seen as tangential); firing one or more staff members; requesting help from supervisors or a Board of Directors; hiring organizational consultants; referring to a book on organizational behavior. But sometimes these choices are inappropriate in that they address a symptom rather than the cause of the actual problem or tend to rely on basic operating assumptions not shared by the alternative organization.

For the purpose of clarification, assume, for example, there is an interpersonal conflict too serious to be ignored and those in the alternative organization feel a responsibility towards alleviating the problem in some way other than merely firing someone. Members of a Board of Directors or supervisors, if such exist, have the same remaining options as others in the organization: the use of organizational consultants and books on organizational behavior. There are two problems related to both options. One is that traditionally the training received by organizational consultants, and the books

written on organizational behavior have a perspective which is incongruent with that of alternatives. That perspective sometimes relies on a vocabulary based on corporate business practice which stresses greater efficiency and profit; those assumptions directly conflict with the ideology of alternative organizations.[9] (That is not always the case, but is more the rule than the exception especially in the case of business consultants.) Secondly, organizational consultants and related books do not address themselves to the family system dynamics (described in this study) which often can illuminate the sources of conflict in the alternative organization and can potentially point out ways of approaching the conflict.

That is, conflicts within an organization are often based on human relationships, and furthermore, those relationship issues can often be seen in terms of family system dynamics. Organizational consultants are traditionally not trained to deal with those family system relationships within the organization. Therefore, this study provides a language and perspective for looking at relationship issues in alternative organizations, drawn from family systems theory. Such a framework is particularly congruent with alternative organizations because such organizations tend to treat human relationships as a priority rather than increasing profits or expedient operations. The social, political and interpersonal goals of these alternatives can thus be fostered, rather than impeded, by such a framework.

The Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine alternative educational structure and function in terms of systems theory as elaborated in therapeutic work with families. A framework and vocabulary with which to describe the underlying process in alternative schools is developed. The relationship between the transactional dynamics of family systems and the transactional dynamics of alternative educational systems are studied. A case example, the King Philip School, is discussed and analogies drawn between its functioning and the functioning of family systems. A model of "healthy" family functioning is posited and similarities postulated between it and "healthy" school functioning.

The focus of the study is three-fold. First, the conceptual framework for the study is developed, drawing on the literature in the field of family therapy. Secondly, this study applies that framework to the analysis of alternative education using King Philip as a case example. Finally the findings are summarized and implications for future research suggested, including the relationship between an economic system and its affect on family systems. Further applicability of family systems theory to alternative schools and other alternative organizations is suggested.

Clarification of terms as used in this study

1. Family Therapy: A type of therapeutic intervention which sees the family as a system of interlocking relationships. Dysfunction is regarded as

a manifestation of a disturbance in the system, rather than an isolated individual's problem. The focus is not on intrapsychic forces but instead on individuals in relationship to important others.

According to Salvador Minuchin, in family therapy the patient is not one individual, but the entire family, and family pathology is seen as the development of dysfunctional sets. The structure of the family is that of an open sociocultural system in transformation. Change occurs through the process of the therapist's affiliation with the family and the restructuring of the family sets. The therapist is not an outside observer, but part of the system and as part of it probes it and evaluates those probes. The emphasis is on the present dynamics and on active intervention. The individual is looked at within this social context of relationships with others. The goal is a more adequate family organization, one which alters the positions of the members thereby changing each individual's experience and maximizing the growth potential of each family members.[10]

According to Murray Bowen:

> The one most central theoretical premise of family systems theory concerns the degree to which we all have poorly 'differentiated', or the degree of our unresolved emotional attachments to families of origin. These are all different descriptive terms to refer to the same phenomenon. The one most important goal of family systems therapy is to help family members toward a better level of differentiation of self. The theory was developed from family research that focused on the entire nuclear family unit. The theoretical concepts describe the range of ways family members are emotionally stuck to each other, and the ways this 'stuck togetherness' continues to operate in the background no matter how much people deny it or how much they pretend to be separated from the others.[11]

Further discussion of family systems therapy, according to Minuchin, Bowen and others, is the subject of Chapter Two.

2. Societal Institutions:

> A dominant trend in modern sociology is to emphasize the contributions that various social institutions make to the stability of the 'social system.' The key idea is that society can be looked at as a system which has needs that must be met ('functions' performed by various institutional 'structures,' to speak technically), so that it (the social system) can survive and reproduce itself over generations. Emile Durkheim, the great French sociologist, was an early and very influential exponent of this 'social system' approach.[12]

Durkheim has the following to say about educational institutions in particular: "Education, far from having as its unique or principal object the individual and his interests, is above all the means by which society perpetually recreated the conditions of its very existence."[13] (Society here is synonymous with the status quo.)

3. Alternative Institutions: Alternative institutions are not those which act to perpetuate the status quo, nor to reform it in the sense of patching it up to make it run more smoothly. They are alternative to the society in all senses. A primary function is to oppose the maintenance of the status quo. They are part of a movement proposing a new economic and social order which would ultimately redistribute the resources, power, opportunities, and economy of the society equally among its people.

An alternative school is one such alternative institution. As part of the radical movement described above it has the following iedological perspective:

> An approach to school reform that can reasonably be called radical does not concern itself with moderate changes of technique. The emphasis is on the process of socialization and the kinds of character traits and values that are encouraged; the functions like 'tracking' children to fit along social class lines to future job possibilities; the detrimental effect of the authoritarian techniques of public schools in qualities like intellectual curiosity. To see that schools need radical reform depends on a perception of deep and pervasive harm that can be ascribed to the dominant structures, values, and techniques of the existing schools. The idea is not, as in the most moderate sense of reform, that we need to improve our techniques somewhat in order to better accomplish what is already being done adequately (e.g., use improved laboratory equipment to enrich the physics teaching already going on). Such pedagogical problems are seen as only marginally important, and in fact extensive concern with such questions often serves as a diversion from the really serious criticisms of the basic aspects of the dominant system of American education.[14]

Methodology

This study develops a conceptual framework and applies it. The basis of the conceptual framework is family systems theory. In presenting that framework, the following four family systems theorists are analyzed and discussed: Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, Murray Bowen, Salvador Minuchin, and Helm Stierlin. The application of the conceptual framework has a dual orientation: it presents a model comprised of twelve applications for understanding the underlying alternative school process, and it uses retrospective examples from one alternative school to clarify and demonstrate various components of the model.

The author was a participant-conceptualizer[15] in an alternative school (King Philip School) for two years from September, 1974 to August, 1976. King

Philip was created by the author who then served as director for its first two years. This necessitated intense involvement in its successful operation and in the lives of the students, staff and families. This has the potential of making that aspect of the study both very valuable and complex. The decision to proceed in this manner is similar to a methodological choice made by Murray Bowen, who wrote a paper in which he chose to describe his theory and use his own family of origin as an example. As he states in that paper:

> The presentation (contains) a practical application of the major concepts in my theoretical and therapeutic systems, and, since I know more about my own family than any other family, I decided to use it as an example.[16]
>
> The purpose of this written report is to present the theory and the method of psychotherapy based on the theory, and then use the example with my own family to illustrate the clinical application of the theory.[17]

The chief difference between this study and Bowen's is that in this study the author did not start with a completed theory and then proceed to apply it. Theories were continually formulated, tested, and reformulated, before, during and after the author's two years at King Philip. The research was participatory research. Parents, students and staff were critical participants in the school's ongoing evaluative process. The participatory character of the research is described by the following statements made by H. C. Kelman[18] "(participatory research is) designed to involve persons as active participants in a joint effort with the investigator"[19] and "creatively manage the tension between basic inquiry and utility."[20]

King Philip is used as a case example in this study. The data supporting the case example is taken from field notes kept from September, 1974 to August, 1976, comprising two separate ongoing notebooks. One notebook is an ongoing log of the day to day activities of the director of the school, daily issues that were dealt with, events, and staff planning and evaluation sessions. The second notebook is divided into categories (such as "adolescence," "governing board," "families," "staff relations," "apprenticeships"). It also includes a section composed of anecdotes and observations on the overall process. These field notes reflect the politics of organizing an alternative school, growth profiles of individual students, staff and families, descriptions of interpersonal dynamics (among staff, students, and parents) and ongoing practical survival issues in the school. Sample excerpts are provided in the appendix.

The conclusions drawn in this study are based primarily on: (1) the library research in family therapy conducted specifically for this study (see bibliography); (2) the data gathered during the author's two years with King Philip; (3) the author's extensive prior reading in non-traditional education (see bibliography), (4) the author's previous experiences as a teacher in both traditional and non-traditional settings in junior high school, high school, and college settings, and (5) the author's experience as a process consultant and co-therapist in family therapy. The application of family systems theory to alternative education and the conceptualization of that application is most specifically a result of the library research in family therapy and the King Philip experience. However, all five areas of experience and reading described above

have significantly contributed to the thoughts presented in this study. The research in family systems theory began prior to the author's involvement with King Philip but intensified during her two years there and immediately thereafter. The reading in non-traditional education and the other teaching experiences occurred prior to the author's participation both in King Philip and the research in family therapy. The author's work as a co-therapist began just prior to her involvement with King Philip, and as process consultant after leaving King Philip. The library research presented in Chapter II (the conceptual framework) was used to analyze the data from the field notes. Thus, the concepts presented in Chapters III and IV are primarily drawn from the field experience as conceptualized by the library research.

This study is not an experimental study which uses control groups, questionnaires, standardized pre- and post-testing, and statistics. It does not posit hypotheses to be tested. It is a conceptual study using library research and active participant-conceptualization. The intention is not for this to simply be another sample of interesting research, but for the conclusions drawn and the theory postulated to be used and applied by others involved in similar endeavors. As James G. Kelly points out in discussing community psychology, "research is a process, a process where knowledge is designed to influence policy."[21]

Organization of the Study

There are five chapters in this study. Chapter Two discusses, in depth, the writings of four theoreticians and presents the conceptual framework for the study. Chapter Three is the first step in applying the conceptual framework to alternative education in terms of developing the notion that the alternative school operates in ways similar to a family system. Systems and subsystems dynamics, developmental stages, and the multigenerational context within the school are described. Chapter Four further applies the conceptual framework by presenting the alternative school's therapeutic process (effecting change and the role of the family therapist in the school), concepts of health and pathology (the relativity of "normality," and the "healthy" alternative school), and the adolescent separation process in the school. Chapter Five reviews the study's findings and the practical application of those findings, and presents directions for future research.

The King Philip School: A Personal Description of Background Information

This study develops a model for describing alternative education using family systems theory. The concepts discussed were continually defined and examined during a two year period at the King Philip alternative school, located in Greenfield, Massachusetts. Therefore, within this study a conceptual model is presented along with examples drawn from King Philip illustrating particular points and demonstrating what occurred in one alternative school. The following is a brief personal description of King Philip's background and development. It is provided here to give the reader the kind of information

which will be helpful in understanding the examples from King Philip as they arise in the study.

In the spring of 1974 there was a conference on alternative education in Deerfield, Massachusetts. Of those attending, a group of local people from Franklin County met together soon after to discuss the feasibility of establishing an alternative school in Franklin County. Represented were directors and staff of youth centers and the Neighborhood Youth Corps, the County Co-ordinator of Human Services, a few representatives from private and public schools, and some unaffiliated, interested individuals. There was quite a wide range of philosophies present. They held in common a belief in the need for a tuition-free alternative to the public school system which would serve low-income teen-agers who had continually met with failure in school and had either officially dropped out of school or were on the verge of dropping out. They wrote grant proposals and received approximately $9,000 seed money (from the Office for Children and the Franklin Community Action Corporation) and a small salary for the director from the local C.E.T.A. program. They chose the name King Philip for the school to commemorate the last American Indian in the area to stand up to the white onslaught.

In the fall of 1974 I was hired as the director. At that time, nothing existed except money and the name. The originators of the school became the first Governing Board. Between that time and February, 1975 when the school actually opened, the following was accomplished: locating and renovating a building (including building, health and fire inspection); choosing and training

a staff composed of volunteers (student teachers and community people); planning and writing an overall description of the structure and curriculum of the school; interviewing potential students and their families; establishing contact with local school systems and community organizations; soliciting curriculum materials, furniture, and books; writing a proposal and receiving another C.E.T.A. slot for a teacher; writing proposals for grants for the following year; and writing a proposal to the State Department of Special Education and receiving approval as a Chapter 766 Special Education facility. In 1974 a Massachusetts state Special Education law, Chapter 766, was enacted. It stipulates that if a student's needs are not being met by the public school, that school must evaluate the student and if necessary pay the tuition required to send her to another school. The evaluation process is called a "core evaluation" and may involve such people as teachers, guidance staff, administration, school nurse, psychologist, student, students' parents, and outside advocates. In order for a school to qualify as a referral source, it must be approved as a Chapter 766 Special Education facility.

The first day of school was February 24, 1975. The school was located in the second and third floors of an old three-story house in downtown Greenfield. The second floor contained the main room, three other rooms and bathrooms. They were freshly painted and had blackboards, bulletin boards, some comfortable chairs and couches, wooden chairs and tables. The third floor was in need of paint and repair (as yet not approved by inspection) and contained three full rooms (including a semi-kitchen) and one non-functional bathroom. Staff, students and I spent large amounts of time during the opening days making it a cozy, inviting and comfortable space.

The staff consisted of two full-time, salaried positions (director, teacher) and nine part-time volunteers. I, as director, served as English and reading teacher, accountant, administrator, fund raiser, liaison with the community, supervisor of staff, and counselor. Together, the teacher and part-time volunteers taught science, math, carpentry, music, history, human development, law, philosophy, and art. One volunteer also served as apprenticeship co-ordinator and another was the school's family therapist (my husband). The training workshops for staff which preceded the opening of the school were designed so that by the time the school started, only those volunteers who were extremely enthusiastic, motivated and committed to the school would remain. Of the nine to remain only one did not last until June, and during the year each assumed various extra responsibilities.

The school year was divided into six-week blocks of time. At the beginning of each session new courses were added and some old ones dropped (that weren't working) and each student made up a schedule of classes including tutorials, small group classes, independent study, projects and apprenticeships. At the end of the six-weeks there was a written and oral evaluation of the past six weeks: students evaluated teachers, teachers evaluated students, and both evaluated the overall progress of the school. During an average week, in addition to classes, there was one lunch period where we cooked a meal and ate together, a half-day staff meeting, and every Friday there was a group meeting followed by a school trip or special guests or group project.

There was no such thing as a "typical" schedule, because each student had a different daily schedule and every six weeks the overall schedule was modified. What should be noted here is that although this study emphasizes the family system dynamics of the school, we did not regard King Philip as a "therapeutic community" or "counselling center." King Philip was a school--an alternative school. For instance, as such, a strong emphasis was placed on academics and on the acquisition of life skills. The classes were generally not taught according to traditional methods using standard textbooks. Most of the teachers at King Philip did not highly regard the techniques and materials used in the public schools and instead creatively developed their own methods or adapted the more traditional to fit the needs and interests of students. To list course titles does not begin to give justice to the skills and talents of the teachers or their styles of teaching; it is meant only to provide a glimpse of the variety of subject areas provided. In order to give the reader a sense of how a week might look, a master list of classes offered during an early six-week period of the school and an individual student's weekly schedule (drawn from that) follow as a sample.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:30 - 9:15	CURRENT EVENTS Math, reading writing tutorials	TUTORING AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: "Youth Tutoring Youth" Math tutorials	CURRENT EVENTS YOUTH TUTORING YOUTH	SCIENCE: FROM BIRTH TO DEATH SEWING/MACRAME	GROUP MEETING IN THE MORNING FOLLOWED BY SPECIAL TRIP, SPECIAL EVENT, PROJECT OR SPEAKER
9:15 - 10:00	ART PSYCHOLOGY SEWING/ MACRAME	BOOKS (A different book each 6 weeks) HUMAN DEVELOP. CHESS	U. S. HISTORY Math, reading, writing tutorials	YOUTH TUTORING YOUTH Reading, writing, math tutorials	
10:00 - 10:45	WORLD OF WORK U. S. HISTORY	CREATIVE WRITING TYPING PSYCHOLOGY	ART Reading, writing, math tutorials	BOOKS HUMAN DEVELOP.	
10:45 - 11:30	YOGA OUR BODIES OURSELVES Reading, writing, math tutorials	SCIENCE: FROM BIRTH TO DEATH TYPING Reading writing, tutorials	ART Reading, writing, math tutorials	CREATIVE WRITING COOKING	
11:30 12:30	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	COMMUNITY LUNCH	
12:30 - 2:30	CARPENTRY PIANO, BANJO OR GUITAR LESSONS	WORLD OF WORK KING PHILIP NEWSPAPER	ON WOMEN PIANO, BANJO OR GUITAR LESSONS MUSIC (Different theme theme each 6 weeks)	STAFF MEETING	

Figure 1. An example of a master schedule of classes. Students composed their own schedule by choosing classes from those offered.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	
CURRENT EVENTS	YOUTH TUTORING YOUTH (Tutoring at an elementary school)	CURRENT EVENTS	SCIENCE: FROM BIRTH TO DEATH	GROUP MEETING IN THE MORNING FOLLOWED BY SPECIAL TRIP, EVENT, PROJECT OR SPEAKER	8:30 - 9:15
MATH	BOOKS	U.S. HISTORY	YOUTH TUTORING YOUTH		9:15 - 10:00
U.S. HISTORY	FREE	ART	BOOKS		10:00 - 10:45
FREE	SCIENCE: FROM BIRTH TO DEATH	ART	MATH		10:45 - 11:30
LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	COMMUNITY LUNCH		11:30 - 12:30
APPRENTICESHIP WITH A SILVER-SMITH	KING PHILIP NEWSPAPER	MUSIC			12:30 - 2:30

Figure 2. An example of one student's schedule drawn from the options presented in the master schedule (figure 1).

The families of the students were a part of the school also. Some eventually became members of the Governing Board, a few occasionally taught special classes and some others helped with fund raising and community relations. At any one time, at least three-quarters participated (some regularly and some irregularly) in the multiple-family group which occurred two evenings each month, and/or ongoing or crisis family therapy. The degree of participation naturally varied. There was a core group of approximately six families who were involved in the organizational stages of the school, some of whom were active in helping insure that King Philip actually opened. There were always a few families who were consistently resistent and who rarely attended anything; on the other hand, there were those who were regularly and actively involved. In fact, there was one parent who continued coming to the multiple family group for many months after her daughter had dropped out of school, and became a community representative on King Philip's Advisory Board. The families were authentically regarded as an integral part of the school, and progressively began to view themselves as such.

King Philip's relations with the community were mixed. Some individuals in the community served as community resource people, teaching special workshops and providing sites in the community for apprenticeships. Some felt confused or fearful and many didn't even know the school existed. The school's relationship with the local school systems was guarded, slowly becoming less tense. They were naturally very threatened; King Philip's values and assumptions provided an automatic challenge to their own. Public opinion exerts strong and

strange influences in a small town, consequently we worked hard at improving those relationships. It was necessary to prove our competence and yet at the same time not seem so competent and confident that they would feel even more threatened.

School opened with nine students. It was a very diverse group: some students were very articulate, intellectually motivated and had little trouble with academics, whereas others had serious learning difficulties; some came from relatively stable home environments while others had violent, chaotic family backgrounds; some had been very withdrawn in public school and others had continually acted out; some were socially mature and others very immature. As a 766 special education facility we were entitled to referrals from the school systems which would then pay tuition for the students ($1500 a year). The students were to be referred by the public school's core evaluation process and after talking with the student and her family and reviewing her records we would decide whether to accept her. New students were accepted only at the beginning of a six-week interval. After the first group of students entered, any new interested student was asked to spend some time in the school meeting everyone to make sure that King Philip was the right place for her. By the time the school opened there were no 766 referrals from the public school. We had made a decision to open anyway. It was a double bind situation: we weren't given referrals (which were to contain operating expenses) because, for one, we hadn't established credibility in the community, but we couldn't establish credibility without actually operating. At a staff, student, family

meeting we chose to take a chance and open, thereby hopefully establishing enough credibility and lessening suspicion. Slowly, through a lot of politicking, (e.g., meetings with school personnel and community leaders and positive publicity), relationships with the key school officials were improved and the first referral was accepted.

The first half year of the school was both enormously exciting and exhausting for everyone participating. A strong sense of community developed among staff, students and parents based on the realization that together all were involved in a continual struggle to ensure the existence of the school and make it into the kind of place envisioned. That vision continually evolved as the school progressed and the needs and interests of the students and families became clear. An agreed upon operating premise, initially articulated by me, was that the educational process should be an empowering one: learning basic academics and vocational skills, developing a critical consciousness and interpersonal relationship skills, while learning how to take control of one's education in order to move towards being able to direct one's own life course in a productive and satisfying manner.

In practice these ideas were applied in terms of seeing the underlying process of the school as a kind of meta-learning process--a process which included learning about the learning occurring on many levels in the school. This meant, for instance, becoming aware of the various contexts within which learning occurs (not just from textbooks and directed by a teacher) and gaining an awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses as a learner. It also meant that

the struggle for existence with which the school was involved was also used as a learning experience. Rather than shield the staff or students or parents from the difficulties of that constant struggle they were continually informed, and kept very much involved in decision-making and problem-solving. As a community we dealt with such issues and confrontations as: those which involved building, fire and health inspectors, King Philip's tenuous relationship to the outside community (most particularly the school system), the school's financial status, the subtleties of Chapter 766 Special Education Law, and our own internal self-government and development.

This is not to imply that a non-hierarchical structure existed. Staff and students had different roles and areas of authority. I, as director, was ultimately responsible for the overall process, but chose to consciously involve staff, students and families (to varying degrees and depending on the issue). Such participation was an intrinsic component of the learning process and contributed to a strong sense of commitment and community among staff, students and families. It would have been easier for me to just do everything and simply delegate responsibilities where appropriate; but in doing that an entire learning and growth process would have been forfeited.

By the end of that first half year, four major dimensions of the school had been established: (1) a sound academic curriculum with an emphasis on basic communication and computation skills, yet including many other interest areas; (2) an apprenticeship program in which interested students were placed in work situations in the community and participated in a class about work

(available options and implications, learning how to think about what you want to do with your life, group processing of apprenticeship experiences); (3) establishing family involvement in terms of decision-making and governance (as members of the Governing Board) and therapeutically in terms of the multiple family group meetings, and family therapy, when appropriate; (4) the solidification of a sense of community and vision and commitment to King Philip. Included within the processes of these four dimensions was the meta-learning process which served as an attempt to connect the components.

By the end of June areas of deficiency were becoming evident. Although the large volunteer staff was composed of generally effective and responsible individuals, it was very difficult to coordinate the small amounts of time which they were able to give, to provide supervision for, and communicate with, everyone, much less maintain a feeling of togetherness, when meeting as a group only once a week. A larger operating budget was needed in order to purchase needed equipment and materials, to make building improvements, and for trips and activities. It was important to construct a working environment conducive to furthering the school's goals while at the same time ensuring that the school would not deteriorate due to overworked staff, a common alternative school syndrome.

In September of 1975 King Philip began its second year with four full-time and one part-time salaried staff members and two part-time volunteers. Of the full-time staff two were paid a minimal subsistence wage through the VISTA Program and one was paid through the On the Job Training program of

C.E.T.A. The part-time staff member and I were paid through a Division of Drug Rehabilitation grant. Operating expenses were met through the tuition reimbursed by school systems which had referred students through Chapter 766. Of the full-time staff one was primarily the apprenticeship coordinator (and special interest teacher), another taught history and music (theory, appreciation, and instruction) and the third was mainly responsible for math. All three also assumed various administrative responsibilities. The salaried part-time position was that of the family therapist. Of the two volunteers one taught art and the other (a student teacher) taught photography, carpentry and mechanics of small motors.

During the year there were staff changes. The math teacher was fired in January; the remaining staff divided the responsibility for teaching math. The art teachers were volunteers and lasted only a few months. A part-time volunteer was added who taught science and some of the math and who became very dedicated. The volunteer who began in September (teaching photography, carpentry and mechanics) also became extremely committed and stayed the whole year. In addition, there were outside people who taught short-term classes or special workshops, responding to the needs and interests of the students.

There was less of a struggle for survival the second year, and that had both positive and negative ramifications. On the one hand, it was easier and more comfortable working in an environment which wasn't on the verge of crisis. But on the other hand it was difficult in that it required us to adjust to

a new momentum and to focus more on creating a dynamic educational process. A few months into the year it became evident that the honeymoon was over. After a long period of confusion and of trying to understand what was occurring, the staff and I realized that by virtue of being new everything had seemed more exciting. We recognized that the newness had worn off. That realization helped us to better understand why we seemed to be going through a more difficult time in terms of keeping things alive and interesting.

During that second year the school developed more of a sense of a normal flow, experiencing together up periods and down periods and holidays and seasons, punctuated (but not dominated) by crises and major events. The basic structure and philosophy of the school was essentially unchanged. At the same time that structure was used in order to provide parameters within which growth and experimentation could occur. For instance, in the spring one entire six-week period and part of another were devoted to a Foxfire Project during which the students went out into the community and interviewed older people who shared their knowledge, wisdom and life experiences. Students took photographs, developed them themselves and recorded the interviews. A series of interviews were published in the local newspaper and eventually compiled into a school book.

During that year new students entered while some others still remained from the first year. It was difficult to adjust to individuals leaving and new people arriving. Yet a core of original students and staff remains committed. In November of that year I gave birth to a baby daughter who two months later started coming to school every day. We all got to know each other a lot better

and more deeply as our commitment to the school and to each other continued to develop in new directions.

I left the school at the end of that second year. The kind of energy and total commitment which it had taken from me to establish King Philip and then sustain it during those two years was too exhausting for me to maintain, coupled with the duties of mothering and the completion of my doctoral studies. In its third year, there were five full-time and one part-time salaried positions, as well as volunteers. Half the staff continued from the preceding year (one had started as a student teacher during the school's first year). A new and necessary position was that of administrator. In terms of the number of staff and budget the school began its third year in very good shape, clearly the best yet. The transition to a new director was very difficult. The first one lasted only four months. The second one is at this point trying hard to make it work.

A few students who entered King Philip in February of 1975 are still there. One is considering returning next year as a teacher's aid while receiving tutoring for his high school equivalency exam. The growth of these students over that time period is remarkable. Lives have been transformed. Those lives and the emergence of the King Philip process is the subject of this study.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Collin Greer, The Great School Legend, (New York: Viking Press, 1973).

[2] Edgar Z. Friedenberg, "School's Out," The New York Review of Books, Nov. 27, 1975, p. 30.

[3] Mario Fantini, Public Schools of Choice: A Plan for the Reform of American Education (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973).

[4] Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, Teaching as a Subversive Activity (New York: Delacort Press, 1969).

Robert Barr, "Curriculum in Optional Alternative Schools," Position paper prepared for the National Institute of Education's Development Conference of Policy Problems in Educational Options.

[5] Jonathan Kozol, Free Schools, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).
Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970).

[6] Terry McDonough, "Alternatives and Alienation: The Oppression of the Public Alternative School Staffer," Edcentric, No. 37, Feb-March, 1976, p. 9.

[7] See writings by Marx and Engels in Bibliography. For example, Marx wrote in 1859: "The mode of production of material life determines the social, political and spiritual life process in general."

[8] Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society (New York: Harrow, 1970).

[9] Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, Management of Organizational Behavior (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969).

[10] Salvador Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

Salvador Minuchin, "Structural Family Therapy," Ch. 11 in the American Handbook of Psychiatry, edited by S. Arieti (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

[11] Murray Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Family of Origin," Georgetown Family Symposia, Vol. I (1971-1972): A Collection of Selected Papers edited by Francis D. Andres and Joseph P. Lorio.

[12] Allen Graubard, Free the Children: Radical Reform and the Free School Movement (New York: Vintage, 1972), p. 3.

[13] Ibid., p. 4.

[14] Ibid., p. 7.

[15] Chester C. Bennett, "Community Psychology: Impressions of the Boston Conference on the Education of Psychologists for Community Mental Health," American Psychologist, October, 1965, p. 834.

[16] Murray Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Family of Origin," p. 113.

[17] Ibid., p. 114.

[18] H. C. Kelman, discussed in James G. Kelly, "The Community Psychologists Roles in Community Research," p. 3.

[19] Ibid., p. 3.

[20] Ibid., p. 3.

[21] Ibid., p. 7.

CHAPTER II

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the conceptual framework for the study. The writings of four major family systems theoreticians are presented and similarities and differences among them pointed out. There are five primary areas of consideration: family theory is differentiated from psychodynamic theory; the concept of the family as a system composed of subsystems and operating within a developmental process and a multi-generational framework is described; the family therapeutic process including capacity for change, goals and the role of the therapist is discussed; systems concepts of health, pathology and normality are presented; and the family of the adolescent and the concomitant separation process is discussed.

Common Differences Between Psychodynamic Therapy and Family Therapy

The field of family therapy is relatively new. Although a few professionals in the mental health field began thinking in terms of family systems dynamics in the 1940's, it wasn't until the mid-1950's that individuals started coming together for the express purpose of discussing their research on family

dynamics and their work with entire family systems.[1] Many of these people had received the then customary psychodynamic and psychoanalytic training. An initially gradual break from these traditions developed momentum and led to the emergence today of family therapy as a distinct and widely acknowledged and acclaimed treatment modality.

The general contrast between family therapy and psychodynamic therapy is striking and can be discussed within a broad framework of differences. One basic differentiating factor between the two is that the former focuses on the study of the individual from the individual's point of view, assigning a label of pathology and treating that person's alleged sickness, while the latter focuses on the total family dynamics in order to investigate and treat the family relationship system.[2] As Bowen states:

> (Family therapists) think in terms of systems, relationships, emotional fields, and breakdown in communication. They tend to "think family" for all emotional problems and they usually end up seeing a number of family members. . . The therapy . . . is directed toward restoring communication, improving relationships in the family, and toward helping family members toward higher levels of differentiation.[3]

Yet also within the two fields there are many different theories and ranges of perspectives which make it difficult to describe either one without taking into consideration the differences within each. For instance, among family therapists there are differences regarding: (1) theory--e.g., the use of a multigenerational framework and the degree to which there is any adherence

to their former psychodynamic roots; (2) practice--e.g., the extent to which entire family systems are seen in therapy together or whether individuals are seen alone, and the usual length of therapy (crisis vs. long-term) may also differ. Although there are these differences among family therapists, they have in common a commitment to seeing the individual within the context of family dynamics, and the focus of therapy is on those interpersonal dynamics.

More specifically, the following is a description of the fundamental similarities and differences among theorists investigated in this study (Boszormenyi-Nagy, Bowen, and Minuchin). Essentially, Boszormenyi-Nagy views the individual as part of a multigenerational system and regards that system as a primary long-term focus for therapy. The individual is viewed in terms of her relationship to others. That factor is more important to Boszormenyi-Nagy than the number of people participating in therapy together. Although Boszormenyi-Nagy is concerned in theory with the whole system, he often practices with parts, including individuals, because his theory makes room for internal dynamics. The overall emphasis is on the rebalancing of multigenerational loyalties rather than any one individual's growth. Minuchin, on the other hand, generally deals directly with the entire primary nuclear family all together. While focusing on the structural relationships and behavioral manifestations of the underlying family dysfunction, he is more apt than Boszormenyi-Nagy to work on short-term crisis resolution with periodic follow-up sessions when needed. A general goal is to restructure the family in order to change dysfunctional patterns and allow each individual family

member to grow and mature to her fullest potential. Lastly, Bowen's basic orientation is to work towards the differentiation of each family member from the others within a multigenerational context. Often only the spouses in a family will be seen together over a lengthy time period, or each individual spouse will work at differentiating from her/his family of origin. Ultimately, that process is seen as fostering differentiation among all family members so that each is able to individuate and mature. The full exploration of the differences and similarities among these three family therapists is the main thrust of this chapter, and is offered here only as a brief overview.

Within the psychodynamic field there are also many differences in perspective and practice. Taking that into consideration, the following provides a brief discussion of some primary differences between psychodynamic and family therapy which are most applicable to this study.

One difference between family therapy and psychodynamic therapy lies in their approaches to diagnosis. During a traditional psychiatric diagnosis, data is gathered on the patient who is then assigned a label. The therapeutic process focuses on the exploration of the past. According to Minuchin, during a family diagnosis the therapist examines the family's interactions in the present and works on restructuring the family in order to change dysfunctional transactional patterns into functional ones.[4] Individual symptoms are seen as evidence of a system in distress. Very often the "identified patient" is expressing the pain which is part of the family system itself. As Boszormenyi-Nagy explains it:

> Symptoms in a child are traditionally viewed as manifestations arising from internal conflicts regarding mastery of age-phase developmental tasks and ambivalent feelings toward internalized or reality objects. The family therapist's view is that difficulties are co-determined and that symptoms appear as a result of conflicts in interpersonal relationships. There is a conscious and unconscious interlocking between systems--individual, marital, parental, and the extended family.[5]

Original Freudian theory posited psychoanalysis as an essentially cognitive process in which the analyst, through the patient-analyst transference relationship, attempts to bring the unconscious realm into view of the conscious one.[6] Later, psychoanalytic theorists began to take non-cognitive and affective determinants into consideration. Family therapists differ in the extent to which they remain connected to psychoanalytic concepts. Yet they tend to emphasize that change does not occur simply on a cognitive level and that actions have a greater interpersonal impact.[7]

> The core of family system dynamics is part of the basic human order which is only secondarily reflected in cognitions, strivings, and emotions of individuals.[8]

> The basic issue of family relationship theory is: What happens in the action context and how does it affect the family's propensity for keeping the system essentially unchanged?[9]

Boszormenyi-Nagy concludes that the ethical attitude is an important clue to understanding the difference between what he refers to as the individual and the relational dynamic rationale points of view. He states that the individual perspective equates shrewdness with ethics and assumes that all anyone cares for is one's own achievement and pleasure, whereas the relational point of view assumes that there exists genuine concerns between at least a few related individuals.[10] This difference has wide implications and Boszormenyi-Nagy

referring to these two ethical attitudes, reviews and reinterprets many traditional theoretical concepts accordingly (e.g., internalization, projection, Freud's theory of instincts, transference).[11]

Psychodynamic theory, with its cognitive individual orientation, does not really deal with the "socioethical reality of the consequences of human action"; it often disregards the ethics of social reality.[12] It tends to deny the ethical-existential component of one's responsibility to others. Reality-testing can be more productively seen in the relational context than in the individual's psyche.[13] As Minuchin points out while commenting on a case example of a couple he had been seeing, that the focus was on the "reality of their complementarity" and that if at that point in their relationship the emphasis had been on delving into their individual realities it is possible that the couple would not have remained together.[14]

The Family As A System

General Characteristics

In moving away from seeing the individual as the site of pathology, family therapists conceptualize the family as a system of interlocking relationships. Pathology in the individual is seen as an indication of dysfunction in that individual's family system. A change in one part of the system or stress affecting one part of the system is following by reciprocal changes in other parts.[15]

> A system is a set of mutually interdependent units. In families, psychic functions of one member condition functions of other members. Many of the rules governing family relational systems are implicit, and family members are not conscious of them.[16]

Family systems are conservative, homeostatic systems. They seek to preserve themselves and retain a kind of balance. The roles in the family, for instance, whether they be that of the scapegoat or the parentified child, shift around in order to keep that balance intact.[17] Family functioning patterns continue to repeat and reinforce themselves. In a family with a dysfunctional member there will also be an overfunctional one. Each family develops its own reciprocating mechanisms. When these mechanisms become inflexible or chronically fixed, the functioning of one member will often become severely impaired.[18]

According to Boszormenyi-Nagy, family systems operate in a dialectical manner. Their systemic homeostasis is always transitional, evolving toward a new synthesis of its disparate parts. The family is never inactive. A family member's role may become fixed, but the movement does not cease. "The prevalence of movement over stagnation is the essence of the dialectic view of family relationships and the family therapist helps the process through his commitment to change, recognition of change, and synthesis of change with unchangeable sameness of being."[19] The resolution of the dialectics does not consist of a watered-down compromise but takes into consideration the meaning of its opposites and without losing the integrity of each moves them to a new synthesis.

Boszormenyi Nagy's dialectic relational approach brings out the interpersonal quality of human life and highlights the responsibility towards one another which is a focus of the systems approach to family dynamics. No person exists in isolation and every person has the responsibility to be accountable for her or his own actions.

> (The) dialectical approach reflects a basic methodological tension and ambiguity: it views the relating parties as active agents and contributors to the ongoing transactional process.[20] Straight-line causation type thinking looks at illness as determined by one cause or chain of causes. A dialectic point of view, on the other hand, looks at the dual psychic reality of any relationship. . . . In each dialogue one person and his human world meets the other and her human world.[21]

The dialectic approach brings to the fore the very human quality of the individual's daily strivings and aspirations. It "aims at a synthesis of psychodynamic and existential phenomenological concepts of man's struggle for a good and sane life"[22] and recognizes "man's struggle for the resolution of the antithetical paradoxes of his living.[23] It is a "middle structure" which incorporates the flux of the intrapsychic and interpersonal forces that reside between Hegel's idealistic superstructure and Marx's materialistic substructure[24] and which is definitively affected by that materialistic substructure.

The dialectic relational approach to family system dynamics is multi-generational. In family therapy sessions no one person's statement is seen as absolute. The family's problems are investigated in terms of the family's vertical dimension (past, present and future generations) and the horizontal dimension (intragenerational dynamics) of any or all of the single generations in the vertical dimension. The therapy shifts between the vertical and horizontal dimensions in order to sort out the reciprocal interpersonal family dynamics.[25]

> Dynamically, every subjective experience implies an underlying self-other or symbolically interpersonal context. Through internalized patterns the individual injects into all current relationships the programming of his formative relational world. Naturally, the self is the experiential center of the individual's world, but the self is always as subjective I, unthinkable without some You.[26]

Bowen describes a multigenerational transmission process which, in a dialectical fashion, occurs when two people of varying levels of differentiation come together and have children. Within bounds, their children will have similar levels of differentation, to be determined by their degree of involvement with the family ego mass.

> The degree of unresolved emotional attachment to parents is determined by the degree of unresolved emotional attachment each parent had in their families of origin, the way their parents handled this in their marriage, the degree of anxiety during critical periods in life, and the way the parents handled anxiety.[27]

Systems and Subsystems: Relational Components

As described by Minuchin, the family system operates according to subsystems which are generally composed of individuals or dyads and may be organized around function, interest, or generational standing within the family. "Each individual belongs to different subsystems, in which he has different levels of power and where he learns differentiated skills."[28] Individuals affect the process of their subsystems and are in turn affected by them.

The family therapist evaluates the interpersonal interactions which compose the overall processes within and between the subsystems in order to locate possible transactional dysfunction. Intervention can occur at any level within any subsystem that is deemed appropriate.[29]

The three main subsystems are the spouse subsystems, the parental subsystem, and the sibling subsystem. Each subsystem has boundaries which are "the rules defining who participates, and how."[30] The specific organization of the family is defined by the boundaries which protect the differentiation process within each subsystem. In order for the family to function adequately, these boundaries must be clear and well-defined. They allow both for interpersonal interaction and proper differentiation.[31]

> For example, the capacity for complementary accommodation between spouses requires freedom from interference by inlaws and children, and sometimes by the extrafamilial. The development of skills for negotiating with peers, learned among siblings, requires noninterference from parents.[32]

Each of the three subsystems has specific tasks which keep the family system functioning. The family therapist helps the subsystems to accommodate to each other, negotiate with each other and establish clear boundaries, functions and lines of authority. For instance, within the spouse subsystem in order to operate well, both spouses have to learn to accept and develop a complementarity of roles and functions. Such a complementarity implies an interdependence between people based on the capacity to accommodate to each other's needs and operate jointly, while at the same time maintaining their own autonomy and

integrity. It is the push and pull between being separate and being together, and the constant search for a balance which maintains both impulses.[33] "In simple human terms, husband and wife need each other as a refuge from the multiple demands of life. In therapy, this need dictates that the therapist protect the boundaries around the spouse subsystem".[34] Similarly, the sibling subsystem must be protected from the other subsystems enough to allow the children in the family to learn how to negotiate and cooperate within peer relationships. And the parental subsystem guides the socialization process by combining nurturance, guidance and control.[35]

In addition to Minuchin's concept of subsystems, Bowen states that the family is a number of different kinds of systems, such as social, cultural, games, communication and biological systems. For the purposes of family systems theory, he concentrates on seeing the family as a combination of emotional and relationship systems. "The term emotional refers to the force that motivates the system, and relationship to the ways it is expressed. Under relationship would be subsumed communication, interaction, and other relationship modalities".[36] The family system and its subsystems do not exist in isolation. The family system process can be seen in terms of the interplay between the relationship system within the nuclear family and the outside emotional forces emanating from the extended family emotional system and the emotionalsystems of work and social life.[37] It goes without saying that

other factors, such as cultural norms and the economic system of the particular society, also have an enormous impact on the quality of life within the family system.

Boszormenyi-Nagy subdivides the relational system into three components: the purely intrapsychic, the internal aspect of the interpersonal (such as loyalty configurations within the family), and the existential aspect of the interpersonal (for example, the number of siblings in the family). "Relational phenomena which pertain mainly to one of these levels may interlock with and obfuscate phenomena or expectations on the other levels".[38] When evaluating a family system it is important to be able to keep these components separate while taking into consideration how they affect one another. Individual concepts have to be integrated with relational system dimensions, such as: the roles and functions which family members assume in relationship to one another, the interpersonal pathological patterns and how they are maintained, the individuals' interrelated unconscious mechanisms, how people are related biologically, the ontic relatedness among individuals (which is based on an essential and very basic dependence on an Other, who is an irreplaceable counterpart of one's Selfhood) and multigenerational accounts of loyalty and justice.[39]

The family process is articulated within the family through the dynamics of the relationship systems. Those dynamics operate according to what have been referred to as transactional patterns or sets,[40] and the triangulation process.[41] As Minuchin writes:

> Family structure is the invisible set of functional demands that organizes the ways in which family members interact. A family is a system that operates through transactional patterns. Repeated transactions establish patterns of how, when, and to whom to relate, and these patterns underpin the system. When a mother tells her child to drink his juice and he obeys, this interaction defines who she is in relation to him and who he is in relation to her, in that context and at that time. Repeated operations in these terms constitute a transactional pattern.[42]

Transactional patterns regulate the behavior of the individual family members; these patterns are in turn regulated by two systems of constraint, one generic and the other idiosyncratic. The first relates to the general, commonly held rules which constitute the organization of the family. For example, within the family system there are differences in power and authority between children and their parents, and there is an interdependency and accommodation between the two parents. The second relates to the often unexpressed but implicitly understood mutual expectations and assumptions about common behavior among family members. These patterns have been formed over an extended multigenerational time period and go through adjustments during each generation.[43] Pathology is seen as the development of dysfunctional patterns or sets which inflexibly resist change and tend to create, aggravate or reinforce stress.[44]

Within the family emotional system, emotional alliances and rejections shift around among members. According to Bowen, the main component of the emotional system is the triangle, which is similar to transactional patterns

in that it points out the predictable ways that people relate to each other. It is different in that it assumes that the three person system of the triangle is the most fundamental relationship system, and that any two person emotional system is unstable because it becomes a triangle as soon as it is under stress. A system composed of more than three people is seen as a series of interlocking triangles.[45]

The functioning of the triangle is affected by the level of differentiation of self of the individuals in the triangle, and the degree of anxiety or emotional tension. The higher the anxiety and/or the lower the level of differentiation of those involved, the more intense and automatic the triangling. The movements--the reactions and counter-reactions--in the triangle become automatic, often without conscious awareness, so that common patterns are developed and continually reinforced. The goal of detriangulation is for one member of the primary triangle to put herself outside of the triangle in such a way as to be able to observe the emotional system (focusing on the process rather than the content) and modify the part that she plays in it.[46]

Developmental Stages of the Family System

Considered together, the dialectic relational rationale of the family system, and the various subsystems and multigenerational relational configurations which are expressed through transactional modes and patterns, are the means by which the nuclear family passes through its developmental stages.

Each family system goes through similar developmental stages due to the commonality of the human experience. The timing and character of these stages may differ somewhat among families due to differences in the actual structure of the family (e.g., number, age, and sex of individual members). The more crucial differences among families are evidenced in terms of how exactly the family handles developmental transitions and stresses; this has often been learned within the context of the previous generations and whether they were able to keep the family intact and stable while supporting the developmental stages and incorporating the concomitant changes into the structure of the family. As Boszormenyi-Nagy writes:

> As the developmental phases of the nuclear family evolve, all members face new demands for adjustment. Adjustment does not mean a final resolution, a closing of a previous phase but a continuing tension of rebalance old but surviving expectations with new ones. Birth, growth, sibling struggles, individuation, separation, preparation for parenthood, aging of grandparents and finally mourning over the lost ones are examples. . .[47]

Minuchin describes the conceptual schema and developmental process of a normal family in terms of three main components. First of all the family is "an open sociocultural system in transformation." It adapts and restructures in order to continue functioning. Secondly, "the family undergoes development, moving through a number of stages that require restructuring." The strength of the system is determined by whether the family can create and use alternative transactional patterns when required by developmental changes or stresses.

Subsystem boundaries must be both firm and flexible. And thirdly, "the family adapts to changed circumstances so as to maintain continuity and enhance the psychosocial growth of each member".[48] These are characteristics which describe the developmental process and determine how a family system handles the transitional stages. Such family functioning serves two ends: "One is internal--the psychosocial protection of its members; the other is external--the accommodation to a culture and the transmission of that culture".[49]

The separation process is the most profound and relentless process which the family has to cope with on a continual basis. It begins with birth and ends at death (only in terms of the actual existence of the individual, not in terms of the continual effect and presence through internalization and memory). It is a process common to all human experience. The way it is dealt with throughout each individual's life course is crucial in influencing the quality and character of that person's life, and how an individual will in turn carry on that process with her own children.

In a healthy family system a child is led through the separation process in such a way that she emerges from the family as a separate, whole, well-integrated person who can at the same time retain an appropriate closeness to and intimacy with her family. Minuchin discusses the adaptation needed at such transitional points.[50] Boszormenyi-Nagy refers to the process as individuation,[51] and Bowen calls it the differentiation of self.[52] It is the family process which ties the other elements together. Because it is most

marked when a member of the family reaches adolescence, it will be discussed in depth during Chapter V: "The Family of the Adolescent."

The Multigenerational Ledger of Justice

The developmental phases of the family create new demands for adjustment which essentially require the rebalancing of loyalty obligations (e.g., young parents must redefine their loyalty to their families of origin and in that process shift the main loyalty towards each other).[53] Thus, the rebalancing of loyalty commitments occurs across generations and provides a conceptual framework with which to describe the developmental process of the family and the ongoing separation process. In providing a vocabulary which describes the dynamics of the multigenerational family system, the concept of loyalty has profound implications and has been a focus of study for Boszormenyi-Nagy.[54] Boszormenyi--Nagy writes:

> The concept of loyalty can be defined in moral, philosophical, political, and psychological terms. Conventionally, it has been described as a reliable, positive attitude of individuals toward what has been called the 'object' of loyalty. The concept of a multipersonal loyalty fabric, on the other hand, implies the existence of structured group expectations to which all members are committed. In this sense loyalty pertains to what Buber called 'the order of the human world'.[55] Its frame of reference is trust, merit, commitment, and action, rather than the 'psychological' functions of 'feeling' and 'knowing'.[56]

Loyalty commitments can be maintained through external coercion, consciously accepted feelings of obligation, conscious desire to be a member, and unconsciously binding obligation to belong; the latter is, of course, the hardest to determine and confront. All in all, family loyalty is determined by each person's position within the multigenerational accounting of loyalty: how former debts and credits of loyalty have been passed on and assumed by individuals within each generation which thereby establishes each person's position within the interpersonal justice of the human world.

> Every individual has a bookkeeping system which keeps track of her "perception of the balances of past, present, and future give-and-take. What has been "invested" into the system through availability and what has been withdrawn in the form of support received or one's exploitative use of the others remains written into the invisible accounts of obligation."[57]

This multigenerational tabulation of merits and indebtedness constitutes the balance between hidden loyalty ties and exploitation which is the reality of human interaction.

> Each loyalty system can be characterized as an uninterrupted bookkeeping of obligations with alternatingly positive and negative balances. Showing of concern and caring add to the positive balance, and any form of exploitation depletes it.[58]

The homeostatis of the loyalty system is maintained not only by each individual's sense of justice, but also through the guilt which accrues when one member does not fulfill the required obligations.[59]

As phenomenological and existential writings have pointed out, individuals are ontically dependent on one another. "Man, suspended in ontological anxiety,

experiences a groundless void if he cannot establish a meaningful personal dialogue with someone or something".[60] Such relationships are predicated on reciprocating patterns of care and giving, and potential exploitation or taking. This ontic dependency constitutes a primary aspect of the multiperson level of relationship systems. "The sum of all ontologically dependent mutual dyads within a family constitutes a main source of group loyalty".[61]

Ontic dependency can be most blatantly seen in terms of infancy. The difference between a child-parent relationship and a peer relationship is that the infant is existentially-ontologically indebted because of having been born into the world and immediately taken care of by parenting figures in a trustworthy, giving manner. The child automatically becomes a debtor, and never really becomes free of that existential indebtedness. "The more one's environment was worthy of trust, the more one gets indebted; the less one has been able to repay the benefits received, the higher will be the accumulating debt".[62] This indebtedness becomes a problem and can create a pathological family system when an individual isn't permitted to balance out her indebtedness. For example, because of a parent's own unresolved loyalty ties and indebtedness, she is not able to receive from her child who needs to give to her in order to be less indebted and obligated (exemplified by the martyrlike parent). This often has the result of keeping the child chronically bound to the family (through the guilt arising from indebtedness) and unable to separate. Another example of a pathological loyalty system stems from the fact that a most basic loyalty

commitment has to do with the actual maintaining of the group in itself. Survival of the group is maintained through bonds of loyalty. Therefore, what is clearly destructive and dangerous behavior to an outsider, may not be seen that way by the family members because the behavior contributes to the maintaining of the group and is evidence of loyalty to the family system. For example, a child may continually participate in anti-social, delinquent behavior in order to allow the parents to focus on her instead of on their own marital unhappiness.[63]

Multigenerational loyalty patterns organize and maintain close relationships by taking into account past and present obligations among the members of the family system. This multiperson accounting system balances each person's obligations and the fulfillment of those obligations, thereby constituting that person's ledger of justice. "The structure of expectations makes up the fabric of loyalties and, together with the accounts of actions, the ledger of justice".[64] Just as loyalty and indebtedness are existential givens, so is justice. Each child is born into an already present system of obligations and their repayment, and learns a sense of justice within that context.

> Justice can be regarded as a web of invisible fibers running through the length and width of the history of family relationships, holding the system in social equilibrium throughout phases of physical togetherness and separation. Perhaps nothing is as significant in determining the relationship between parent and child as the degree of fairness of expected filial gratitude.[65]

The type of parent one becomes is deeply affected by the quality and degree of parenting that the parent received as a child. A parent who grew up

in an environment which did not foster trust in the justice of human interactions will probably have a lot of trouble giving (without receiving) to an infant, or may become overdevoted and stifle the child's growth out of guilt-laden past obligations or overcompensation for what they lacked. "Each generation is given in proportion to what the previous generation has received and the expectation posed on each generation is balanced with what is given in terms of care and concer".[66] Each generation perpetuates the past by being used to settle old accounts; the pattern becomes cyclic and repetitious. A family member often inherits and becomes accountable for past obligations. These unsettled accounts establish a revolving slate in which future close relationships are deeply affected by those unmet obligations and the guilt associated with not meeting them.[67]

> In order to be able to grow, one must recognize and deal with the invisible bonds originating from one's formative period of growth. Otherwise one is apt to live them out as repetitious patterns in all future relationships.[68]

The use of the term justice rather than power is intentional. It is often customary to see relationships in terms of the balance of power and the victimization of family members by each other. To investigate the multi-generational family ledger of justice is a means for getting at the motivational level behind "power games" in order to eventually balance the ledger and transcend the exploitative patterns into which a family may be locked. It is more important to explore how people get hurt through existential inter-

dependence than through power exploitation.[69] The term justice "connotes human commitment and value in all their rich and motivating power and meaning".[70]

Rather than see exploitation as an extension of power, it can be discussed in terms of merit within the framework of justice. Merit is "the balance between intrinsically exploitative versus mutually enhancing aspects of any relationship".[71] Close, intimate relationships are based on merit; justice involves the distribution of merit within an entire relationship system. Equitable reciprocity is its ideal goal. An imbalance in the merit accounting within a relationship is taken as exploitation of one by the other. That exploitation can be either the person-to-person type (one person is exploited by another through nongiving or nonreceiving) or the structural kind (which originates from the character of the system and victimizes both people). An example is a parent who needs and desires appreciation and a child who desperately wants to express appreciation, but are not able to do so.[72]

> Undischarged love and revenge are fundamental strategic considerations of a relationship; issues of whether the parents should agree in front of the children or how good a "team" they are in disciplining the children are of secondary tactical significance.[73]

The question which results from seeing family dynamics in terms of a system of justice and loyalty in which each individual keeps a multigenerational accounting of merits which serve to balance the individual's obligations and needs, is: Who is ultimately accountable? If a child's acting out behavior is

unintentionally and unconsciously encouraged by a parent (who was also a victim of her parent's unconscious motivations, ad infinitum), who is responsible and how can the ledger be balanced? This is not to say that the child is not responsible for her actions; it implies that the underlying cause resides in the family system and that therefore the whole system needs to make a commitment to family therapy. The following is quoted as a prime example of the need for and type of treatment which would address the issue in terms of family system dynamics:

> A father was observed to act in a most objectionable, hostile way, unquestionably scapegoating his daughter. We could point out the sadomasochistic, dependent, and complexly defensive characteristics of the intergenerational struggle. We could register the hurt feelings of the victim and the guilt of the perpetrator. But the concept of the injured order of justice has more comprehensive, farther-reaching system implications for therapeutic practice. The family therapist will learn that certain past relational accounts which cannot be settled through self-reflecting analysis, transference resolution, and insight can actually be resolved through interpersonal initiative and corrective action, often in a three generational context.[74]

The Family Therapeutic Process

According to Minuchin, the family therapeutic process includes a number of phases which do not necessarily follow a sequential pattern. They are aspects of the process which are taken into consideration at differing points during the therapy. The needs of the family system, the interventions and restructuring leading towards the set goals, and the outcome determine the

overall process. Minuchin discusses four such phases: (1) Diagnosis, which includes the "determination of family structure, areas of strength, and dysfunctional sets" and intervention priorities. (2) "Determination of objectives, or goals for change" which evolves during the therapy. (3) "Assessment of therapeutic options and selection of strategies." Each option is evaluated in terms of power, type and cost. "Stratagem selection takes into account the family's assessment of its needs, the therapist's assessment of priority, the pathways open within the limitations imposed by the family's style and the therapist's style and capability." (4) Periodic evaluation which considers results, reassesses priorities and stratagems, and assesses the implementation.[75] Minuchin uses a case example of an anorexic child and shows how the phases did not operate sequentially in that further work on conflictual family relationship issues uncovered during the diagnosis occurred only after the anorexia symptoms were gone.[76]

Minuchin writes, "The family therapist's initial objective is to transform (the) individual label into a diagnosis that includes the family."[77] The diagnosis is an evolving analysis which is achieved through the therapeutic strategy during which the therapist joins the family system, forming a new therapeutic system and evaluating the family's present interactions.[78] In assessing those interactions, the therapist focuses on: the structure of the family, its transactional patterns and the potential alternatives; the system's flexibility and its capacity for restructuring; the sensitivity of the system to the individual members (degree of enmeshment of disengagement); the family life context and history

with its sources of support and strength; the family's developmental stage; the way in which the identified patient is used to maintain the present family system. The diagnosis and the actual therapy become inseparable.[79]

It is generally agreed that a major preliminary objective which helps change the focus from the identified patient to the entire family system is that of getting a commitment from the family to be involved in the therapy together. In this way a therapeutic contract with the total membership of the family relationship system is established.[80] The contract can be very limited and will also necessarily evolve during the therapy, but should include general agreement on the nature of the problem, goals for change, and general logistics.[81] During this process the family should feel free to discuss apprehensions and fears while the therapist conveys a sense of optimism and strength.[82] Family members should be able to reach some kind of consensus on what has been missing for all of them in the family and what they would like to gain for themselves as well as for the whole family.[83]

Affecting Change and Progress/Therapeutic Goals

The actual depth and duration of family therapy depends on the kinds of goals which the family is working towards and the individual capacities for change of the family members.[84] Boszormenyi-Nagy states that

> The individuals; and family's capacity for work includes: "being able to eventually explore and begin to work through those aspects of arrested emotional growth which are structurally connected

> with a shared postponement of mourning as well as individuation;" "facing the invisible patterns and accounts within relationships" and "to see the unsettled obligations.[85]

Minuchin adds that

> The family's progress is facilitated when "they are challenged in their perception of their reality," "given alternative possibilities that make sense to them," and "once they have tried out the alternative transactional patterns, new relationships appear that are self-reinforcing."[86]

The change is maintained even when the therapist is gone because new dynamics within the family are in operation which support the new transactional patterns so that they are self-maintaining.[87]

Change in the family structure affects each individual by altering her position within the family. When the organization of the family undergoes a transformation each individual's experiences are also modified. According to Minuchin, a basic premise of family therapy is that the individual's psychic life is not solely an internal process; individuals are profoundly affected by context and environment (a change in context creates change in the individual).[88] Reciprocally, Bowen describes how family psychotherapy with one member of the family can loosen up the whole family system. When one person begins to reach a higher level of differentiation it necessarily affects those to whom she is closest, especially when the

> Changing of self involves finding a way to listen to the attacks of the other without responding, of finding a way to live with what is without trying to change it, of defining one's own beliefs and convictions

> without attacking those of the other, and in observing the part that self plays in the situation.[89]

An immediate result when an individual changes is that she often then faces opposition from those in her family, work or social situations who are threatened by that change. As Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark put it, "growth or maturation on any member's part implies a degree of personal loss and relational imbalance".[90]

Traditionally, according to psychodynamic theory, evidence of change is seen in terms of how the individual is functioning in relation to such things as behavior, mood, health, disposition and sexuality. According to family systems theory, change can be seen in terms of "the quality and degree of openness, meaningful involvement, individuated rather than amorphously fused interactions, more meaningful communications, and more tolerance of growth or separation" in addition to "whether the hidden accounts of exploitations and obligations have been or can be confronted".[91] Mere conscious confrontation with one's feelings is not a therapeutic endpoint.[92] Overall goals towards which these changes are directed include "a more adequate family organization, one that will maximize the growth potential of each member of that family",[93] while reducing anxiety, improving the degree of open and responsible communication, reducing the level of furtive communication such as gossips and secrets,[94] changing dysfunctional transactional patterns into more functional ones,[95] and encouraging individuation in order to raise each

person's level of differentiation.[96]

Role and Technique of the Family Therapist

As these goals are reached the family should have learned how to monitor itself without the therapist and make changes in the family when called for, using the therapist as an occasional consultant.[97] The role of the therapist in initiating and stabilizing the changes in the family structure and organization is multidemensional, and can be seen from differing perspectives. For example, Minuchin states,

> The family therapist's function is to help the identified patient and the family by facilitating the transformation of the family system. This process includes three major steps. The therapist joins the family in a position of leadership. He unearths and evaluates the underlying family structure. And he creates circumstances that will allow the transformation of this structure. In actual therapy these steps are inseparable.[98]

The family therapist joins the family system while not letting herself get sucked into it, and from that position she makes restructuring operations which are the dramatic interventions and challenges that create movement in the family system towards the already defined goals. Examples of restructuring operations include: actualizing family transactional patterns, marking boundaries, escalating stress, assigning tasks, utilizing symptoms, manipulating moods, and by supporting, educating and guiding.[99] These restructuring operations occur within the context of the therapist's continual

joining of the family system (actions which aim at relating to the family system) and then accommodating to the system (which is when the emphasis is on the therapist's adjustment of herself in order to achieve joining). Accommodation techniques include: maintenance (providing support and confirmation of family structure); tracking (following the family's communication and behavior while eliciting information); mimesis (adopting the family's tempo, mood or behavior, sometimes without intention).[100] In working with families each subsystem is joined differently, according to each one's internal transactional patterns, style, affect and language. Usually, joining a subsystem also acts as a restructuring intervention because it compels the other family members to regroup in order to deal with the new pattern.[101]

Bowen describes the function of the therapeutic system in terms of helping family members to reach higher levels of differentiation. Referring to his concept of triangles, he states that modification of the emotional patterns in one main triangle in the family creates change in the other ones which are in emotional contact with it. The role of the therapist then is to keep herself "detriangled" (emotionally outside) the system while at the same time constituting a new triangle with the two primary members of the family (usually the spouses) and herself.[102] There are four main things which the therapist does in a situation with the two spouses:

> The first is to keep the emotional system between them sufficiently alive to be meaningful and sufficiently toned down for them to deal with it objectively without undue emotional reactiveness. The therapist is active with constant questions. . . A second function is to keep self "detriangled" from the emotional process between the two family members. . . The third function is to establish what I have called an "I position," which is part of the differentiation of a self. The therapist takes action stands in relation to them, which then permits them to begin to do the same to each other. The fourth function is to teach them how emotional systems operate and to encourage them each to work toward the differentiation of self in relation to their families of origin.[103]

Boszormenyi-Nagy shares Minuchin's and Bowen's emphasis on helping the family untangle the emotional enmeshment which interferes with their individuation[104] and the establishing of an alliance with the healthy resources in the family instead of focussing on the identified patient or the pathology.[105] They also find it beneficial to conduct sessions with all family members present because it is conducive to establishing the balanced reciprocity among the members which is aimed for; the three-generational approach provides a chance for rehabilitating (not merely facing or expressing) one's painful image of one's parents.[106] And yet at the same time Boszormenyi-Nagy notes that the number of members of the family seen at once is not as important as her "intention to be concerned with every family member's emotional well being and growth."[107] Regardless of how many members are seen at one time, Boszormenyi-Nagy agrees with Minuchin and Bowen that "we do not subscribe to the magic therapeutic value of increased knowledge of conscious awareness if they are

not channeled into new patterns of action".[108]

Boszormenyi-Nagy applies his theory of justice to the work of the family therapist:

> As he tunes into the most emotionally invested attitudes of family members, he should train himself to recognize the ethical issues with their underlying justice implications. He should form in his mind a ledger of justice along with the construction of the family tree membership. How was the overtly offensive member himself injured? By whom? How to avoid simply falling into a crusade against the apparent wrongdoer? What factors determine the wrongdoer's attitude toward the apparent victim? How do the other members fit into the whole? [109]

Upon examining multigenerational family relationships they note that retributory justice is a major family dynamics principle.[110] To sum up the role of the therapist, Boszormenyi-Nagy discusses what characterizes an effective family therapist regardless of her technique or training:

> An intrinsic capacity for courageously facing his own family relationships is one of the most crucial factors in enabling the family therapist to sustain his function. We believe that such capacity is more directly proportional to essential therapeutic activity than any behavioral characteristics.[111]

> Growth in our personal life is not only inseparable from growth in our professional experience but. . . . it is also our greatest technical tool.[112]

Concepts of Health and Pathology

"Normality"

Within the context of family systems theory, such dichotomies as "good guys versus bad guys" and "normality versus abnormality" are absent. Work with one's extended family helps one to realize that each individual is a human being, not inherently good or bad, trying to get through life in the way she knows best, reacting with the emotional forces around her.[113] The relative health or pathology of a system is evaluated in terms of function rather than with a diagnostic label. It is seen as a transient stage rather than a chronic state. For example, schizophrenia is seen in terms of functional helplessness rather than constitutional helplessness. It is the difference between describing a person as "being helpless" as opposed to simply "helpless" characterlogically.[114]

Pathology such as schizophrenia which would traditionally be understood in terms of the individual's inner psyche is instead explored according to family system dynamics, which investigates the interplay between the individual and her family system. As Boszormenyi-Nagy writes:

> We believe that health and pathology are jointly determined by: (1) the nature of the multiperson relational laws, (2) the psychological characteristics ('psychic structure') of individual members, and (3) the interlocking between these two realms of system organization. A degree of flexibility and balance regarding the individual's fit into the higher system level contributes to health, whereas inflexible adherence to system patterns may lead to pathology in individuals.[115]

Transitory imbalance in the family relationship system and its intergenerational ledger of justice does not in itself constitute pathology. It encourages growth in relationships in that individual members must work at rebalancing their relationship system. The kind of imbalance which is assumed to be pathogenic is that which is so constant and lasting that it resists any attempts to rebalance and change it; individuals lose trust and hope. Such balance or imbalance is understood not merely in terms of any one individual's psychic state but in terms of the inter-relationship between all the members and their ledgers of justice. System terms of pathogenicity takes the place of relational pathology within individuals.[116]

Minuchin would describe the manifestation of such system pathogenicity in terms of the development of dysfunctional sets or transactional patterns. These indicate that the family system is in trouble. Functional sets can change; dysfunctional sets not only do not change but they maintain and escalate stress.[117] Pathology is indicated when families who are stressed react by increasing "the rigidity of their transactional patterns and boundaries, and avoid or resist any exploration of alternatives".[118] As a system, the family becomes extremely disengaged or else extremely enmeshed. Either way the function is to protect the family against change. One member often then becomes the scapegoat of the family system's pathology, exhibiting a type of behavior which leads to her being identified as the "patient" by the family; actually she is merely expressing the dysfunction and pain within the entire family system.[119]

Boszormenyi-Nagy, Minuchin and Bowen all write about the concept that no family system is characterlogically normal or abnormal. Minuchin writes that every family experiences stresses at various points or stages as a result of stressful contact between one member or the whole family and extrafamilial sources, stress at transitional points in the family's development, or stresses centered on idiosyncratic problems.[120] Stressful contact at these points does not in itself indicate pathology, of course. "Transitional processes of adaptation to new situations, which carry the lack of differentiation and the anxiety that characterize all new processes may be mislabeled as pathological."[121] Boszormenyi-Nagy adds that conflicts of loyalty are intrinsic to the developmental process of any family[122] and Bown notes that some degree of emotional fusion is universal except in the hypothetical, non-existent totally differentiated person.[123] A type of perfect super-family is clearly not what is being posited. "All close relationships contain conflicts which entail struggles for closeness and distancing, for likeness and for differentiation, for being bound and for being separate, for dependence and individuation.[124]

The way that stresses are dealt with and thereby either alleviated or exacerbated are usually more able to be influenced than the occurrence of the stressful event itself. Anxiety and stresses are handled according to family patterns, and those patterns constitute part of the fabric of each individual's life course. Bowen writes: "All things being equal, the life course of people is determined by the amount of unresolved emotional attachment, the amount

of anxiety that comes from it, and by the way they deal with anxiety".[125] Boszormenyi-Nagy's concept of the multigenerational ledger of justice can be seen as the framework within which the unresolved attachments and resulting anxieties described by Bowen originate and within which they are consequently played out. Bowen's differentiation of self process is, in this sense, similar to what Boszormenyi-Nagy describes as the balancing of obligations and loyalties. For Bowen the goal is reached as individuals attain higher levels of differentiation of self, while for Boszormenyi-Nagy the goal is linked to a rebalanced multigenerational relationship system.

At times of stress the family's strengths are put to the test and the weaknesses often become exaggerated. Coping and adjustment mechanisms are taxed and if sets are dysfunctional this is the time that they generally become obviously so and someone calls for help for the scapegoated "identified patient". There is nothing necessarily permanently pathogenic about such a family system. Each system's health or pathology is relative and circumstantially determined. As Minuchin states:

> No family model is inherently normal or abnormal, functional or dysfunctional. A family's differentiation is idiosyncratic, related to its own composition, developmental stage, and subculture, and any model is workable. But every model has inherent weaknesses, and these may be the parts that give way when the family's coping capacity becomes exhausted.[126]

A recognition of the kinds of underlying dynamics influencing an individual's character and relationships can contribute to the development of

a more functional family system. For instance, an understanding and working out of the ledger of justice of one's family of origin (with its obligations, expectations and merit accounting system) can influence the choice of marriage partner and the quality of the marriage. Unresolved obligations to one's family of origin generally result in a conflict between loyalty to one's family of origin and one's newly constituted nuclear family, and difficulty in shifting the main loyalty and commitment to the new nuclear family, where it belongs.[127] Moreover, one's spouse often ends up acting as a scapegoat or scapegoater in order to rebalance that indebtedness to her family of origin which continues to exert a profound influence.

> Without an ability to intuitively perceive the prospective mate as a nodal point in a loyalty fabric, one gets married to the wishfully improved recreation of one's own family of origin. Each mate may then struggle to unwittingly coerce the other to be accountable for her or her felt injustices and accrued merits from the family of origin.[128]

This is one way that family system pathology is transmitted from one generation to the next.

The continuity of the multigenerational transmission process described above is predicated on the reinforcement of the family members' fixed and passive family roles which serve to extend and prohibit the resolving of past loyalty accounts. Within such frozen role obligations no one individual is actually autonomous or accountable. The family's hierarchy of obligations and each individual's bookkeeping of merits becomes the unarticulated,

dominating force in the family, inteferring with the healthy individuation of its members.[129] Individuals cannot differentiate from one another because the bonds are so tight and constricting. Any moves toward separation are seen as disloyalty to the family system. Bowen would describe the family as an undifferentiated family ego mass[130] and Minuchin would describe it as an extremely enmeshed family.[131] Within this context of describing dysfunctional family systems, the relationship between Boszormenyi-Nagy's, Minuchin's and Bowen's conceptual framework can be seen. Boszormenyi-Nagy's discussion of the effect of imbalances in the multigenerational ledger of justice can be described as the larger framework within which the underlying anxiety and unresolved emotional attachments, which Bowen discusses, are evidenced. Higher levels of differentiation of self cannot be achieved if loyalty obligations and merit accounting are not rebalanced. The concomitant behavioral manifestations of this process can be viewed in terms of Minuchin's description of dysnsfunctional transactional patterns, which are the signs which indicate that the family system isn't functioning well.

The Child in a Disturbed Family

In pathological family systems a child is usually the one who is scapegoated. Family therapy has been referred to as preventive therapy,[132] because when it is effective, it is the children of the present and future families who benefit most directly. As a result of the therapeutic process,

the parents (and grandparents) of the children undergo changes which make them better differentiated, healthier individuals and more capable spouses and parents. The intention is for the children growing up in such a family (and then their children in turn) not to have to deal with the same struggles of indebtedness, fusion of roles and diffuse anxiety that plagued the many generations preceding them.

Family therapy represents an attempt at blocking the intergenerational transmission of pathological patterns and behavior. That process in which the child inherits the parents' pain and unresolved accounts is not a willful, intentional one. In fact, one reason it occurs is because of the parents' lack of recognition about the dynamics operating between them and their own parents, and between them and their children. For example, of one's parents were non-gratifying, overly frustrating or not available early in their children's lives, their children often grow up without a sense of worth or well-being. Without their dependency needs met they are always looking for love and appreciation. Those inner desires are then often repressed resulting in their feeling trapped and numb, sometimes projecting their anger and disappointment onto others, sometimes falsely overcompensating for what they lacked. When they in turn have children, their children then may unwittingly be tuned into the underlying despair, anger and depression of their parents and carry that with them as if it were their own burden.[133]

Depression in young children seems to be rarely recognized because other symptoms can mask the underlying depression. In disturbed families the fundamental affect among all members may be depression. The parents, who often actually deny being depressed, unknowingly pass on their despair to their children.[134] While denying being depressed and deprived, the parents often maintain that they are committed to becoming better parents than their parents were and "giving everything" to their children. Upon becoming martyr-like parents, they create guilt feelings in their children who feel constantly indebted and bound to live up to the parents' expectations.[135] The plight of the child caught in a disturbed family system is summed up in the following:

> . . . children need a life space of their own, to play and to learn, to be permitted to be a child. In pathogenic family systems, by contrast, children are used as objects upon whom many conscious and unconscious feelings and attitudes are projected by their parents. Thus, children are perceived as sources of life-giving strength; as objects of loyalty or disloyalty. They may be caught in a power struggle between the parents or even between the parents and their family of origin. Children may be perceived as stimulators of conflicts, to be blamed. They may be experienced as sources of dependence who are rejectors as the parents may have felt rejected. Yet, children remain eternally loyal. They may appear exploited by their parents, but on some level children--out of loyalty--unconsciously comply with the parent's need to exploit them.[136]

This is not to say that children are merely pawns within the family system; individual motivation and developmental phases are also important

qualifying faetors. The family problems, though, tend to impede the child's passage through the normal developmental phases and ereate more difficulties than need be. The following is a ease example:

> . . . one young girl after the onset of her menses beeame unable to attend sehool. Her school phobia was eertainly motivated by individual as well as familial faetors. On an individual basis, there was her fear of growing up and eontrolling her sexual strivings, competing socially with other girls in the boy-girl situation, reworking Oedipal feelings, ete. Her academic performanee was not yet affeeted. However, on a multiperson system level, this sehool-phobie daughter was also responding to her parents' fears about sexuality and child rearing. The mother had suffered a post-partum depression after the birth of the daughter. The couple then deeided that they would never have any more children. The three of them were locked in a position where no one could make a move without the other; the mother eventually did volunteer work at her daughter's school as one way of getting her to attend school. The father's business was attaehed to the family home, so that the three of them were eontinuously together through the days and evenings. The eoneern about their daughter also helped to mask their extreme loyalty and dependence on the wife's family of origin. The daughter in attempting to eontrol her own impulses was also uneonseiously placed in a position to eontrol her parents' behavior. It was the daughter who eaeh night would decide whether the family pet would be sleeping in her parents' bedroom or with her.[137]

The development of psyehosomatie illness in a ehild is another example of the intricate conneetion between the ehild's development and the strueture and functioning of her family. A psychosomatic illness ean be seen as the expression of a family dysfunction in the identified patient. "The symptom may be the patient's attempted solution to the family dysfunction. . . or it

may have arisen in the individual family member because of his particular life circumstances and then been utilized and supported by the family system as a system-maintaining mechanism".[138] According to Minuchin, the typical psychosomatogenic family is characterized by three factors. One is a special type of family organization and functioning which includes enmeshment, over-protectiveness, rigidity, and a lack of conflict resolution. The second is the child's involvement in the parental relationship and parental conflict. The last component is a potential physiological vulnerability.[139]

Accordingly, a relatively healthy family system would be one which is based on basic trust and mutual accountability to a just order, rather than fixed, past obligations. Clear rules and criteria of obligations along with permissible individual autonomy contribute to the development of that environment.[140] Such a family system needs to construct clear-cut boundaries in order to protect the differentiation of the system and its subsystems. The family system must also be able to adapt to change, considering the fact that it will regularly pass through developmental phases and unforeseen stresses, and need to restructure in light of them. Therefore, the family system should develop a range of potential transactional patterns and alternatives, and the ability to be flexible and use them when they are needed.[141] These factors, when taken together, should help create a process within which a child can have both warm, loving support and comprehensible, legitimate expectations and limits which will foster her gradual differentiation and individuation into a

whole, separate person appropriately and intimately connected to her family.

The Family of the Adolescent
The Separation Process

The Separation Process: Overview

The process of separation within the family begins as soon as the child is born and, generally speaking, never really ends. It is a dynamic, primary component of the overall developmental process within the family system. The way it is dealt with is affected by how it was handled in previous generations and the levels of differentiation which the parents have reached. It profoundly influences the direction in which a child matures and develops and the type of parent and spouse she may become as an adult. The kind of model healthy family composed of highly differentiated individuals typified by the above description is one in which the separation process is relatively smooth and natural. It is not without conflicts, but the family is able to deal with stressful situations and work them through without falling apart. That process can be described as a

> generally expanding spiral of mutual individuation and differentiation occurring on various emotional, cognitive, and moral levels. Optimally, this spiralling leads to relative independence for both parties, yet is an independence based upon "mature" interdependence![142]

Boszormenyi-Nagy notes that the dialectics of the separation process involve a continual balance between forces of individuation and relational

forces. It is a continual dialectical process in which both forces need to be recognized and balanced with each other. It is not a matter of finding a compromise but of living with the push and pull.[143] Minuchin describes the therapeutic process which facilitates movement towards eventual individuation as one which combines the preservation of individuation complemented by the support of mutuality. While providing non-threatening support, the family therapist reinforces individual identity boundaries while encouraging family members to be supportive to one another in helping each other and the family to change.[144] As Boszormenyi-Nagy states, "Autonomous growth follows, therefore, from both integrity based on recognition of a balance of commitedness and capacity to separate",[145] which leads to the following concept of relational autonomy:

> Our concept of relational autonomy pictures the individual as retaining a modified yet fully responsible and sensitively concerned dialogue with the original family members. In this sense the individual can be liberated to engage in full, wholly personal relationships only to the extent that he has become capable of responding to parental devotion with concern on his part and with the realization that receiving is intrinsically connected with owing in return. Loyalty thus is not synonymous with love or with positive emotions, although emotional "warmth" is inseparable from a sensitivity to the fairness of human situations. In family therapy we assume and actively explore how every parent has a chance for an improved, more reciprocal loyalty exchange with his family of origin. A more giving attitude can yield beneficial returns for the parent himself, even if his own dependence on the family of origin can never be gratified.[146]

Separation and Loyalty

According to Boszormenyi--Nagy, a common difficulty encountered during the separation process is that moves toward emotional maturation are often seen as signs of disloyalty to the family. The family then tends to lock forces and draw the child in tighter through the use of guilt mechanisms in order to ensure the unaltered survival of the family system (which they think is in jeopardy).[147]

> A very important, deep-seated paradox lies in the antithetical relationship between individuation and family loyalty. Whereas it appears on the surface that failure to develop and to mature makes a child disloyal toward his family's aspirations, a more basic truth is that every step leading toward the child's true emancipation, individuation, or separation tends to touch on the emotionally charged issue of every member's denied but wished-for everlasting symbiotic togetherness with the family of origin.[148]

Thus, individuation can be seen in the context of the developing child's attempt to balance her obligations of loyalty with her slowly emerging separation. The balancing of old and new loyalty commitments is a major component of this process.[149] Families which see impending individuation most severely as a threat and continually resist it, are often the kinds of families that don't have a very stable structure and tend to view growth connected changes as similar to profound psychic loss.[150]

Differentiation of Self

Bowen has developed a critique of the separation process which is based on his concept of the differentiation of self. According to Bowen, the separation process entails the child slowly learning how to differentiate herself from her parents. While working towards individuating, the child begins to define a selfhood which is separate from that of her parents. Slowly disengaging from her original fusion with her parents, she moves towards her own emotional autonomy. Thus, the "Differentiation of Self" (a phrase coined by Bowen) signifies the degree to which a person becomes emotionally differentiated from the parent.[151]

> The degree of unresolved emotional attachment is equivalent to the degree of undifferentiation. The lower the level of differentiation, and the greater the amount of unresolved emotional attachment to parents, the more intense the mechanisms to deal with undifferentiation.[152]

The basic degree to which a person is differentiated is directly affected by the degree of differentiation of the parents and the emotional atmosphere in the family of origin. This in turn greatly affects the individual's future quality of life.[153]

According to Bowen's Differentiation of Self Scale there is no such thing as "normality." Along a continuum from O (the lowest level of no self) to 100 (complete emotional maturity), there are no known individuals

who have actually attained 100. Each individual's level is affected by the general level of the family, especially that of the parents. Similarly, the highest level of differentiation possible for a family is the highest level that any family member can attain and maintain in the family. The Scale is "an attempt to conceptualize all human functioning on the same continuum"[154] and is used to estimate the degree of fusion between the intellect and the emotions, while distinguishing between the basic-self and the pseudo-self. (The basic self is the solid self within the self that is stable under stress and not influenced by the relationship system; the pseudo-self fluctuates frequently depending on occurrences in the relationship system.) It is the basic self which is of prime concern here.[155]

> People low on the scale may keep their lives in emotional equilibrium and symptom free but they are vulnerable to stress, life adjustments are more difficult, and they have a high incidence of human illness and problems. People higher on the scale are more adaptable to stress, they have fewer life problems, and deal with problems better.[156]

The level of differentiation of self from the family of origin directly affects the degree of emotional fusion between the spouses in a family, and the way that they deal with it in turn affects the way it will be absorbed and expressed. The symptoms of disturbance and fusion are usually expressed in any of three areas: marital conflict, dysfunction in a spouse, or projection onto the children who become scapegoats.[157] The therapeutic process is aimed at helping

individual family members towards a higher level of differentiation of self. When any one member of a family begins to reach a higher level of differentiation the rest of the family generally reacts negatively in order to try to restore the family to its former level of togetherness and fused equilibrium. If the individual can maintain her position and disregard the family's opposition, later the family usually will come around. But during the process, a successful differentiating effort has to be for the "self" alone. If it is done for others or approval then the effort was for togetherness and not for differentiation.[158]

Parenting and the Separation Process

The differentiating process proceeds most smoothly when the parents are competent and confident in their role as parents. And "the quality of parenting always depends on the extent and integrity of the parenting the parent himself had once received as a child. The multigenerational accounting determines the balance of the new relationship".[159] "Each generation is given in proportion to what the previous generation has received and the expectation posed on each generation is balanced with what is given in terms of care and concern".[160] Ideally, early on a child develops from her relationship with her parents the "capacity of mutual trust and loyalty commitments based on the laws of reciprocity and fairness".[161] This generally occurs when the parents themselves experienced such trust and fairness when they were growing up. Then both the parents and the children feel like valuable and loved individuals.[162]

Parents who have been able to smoothly differentiate from their own

parents and settle accounts with their parents are more able to provide the kind of parenting which will permit their own children to steadily individuate and mature. As parents they will be able to provide nurturance, guidance, and authority in proportion to the developmental needs of their children and their own abilities. The family structure will include clear boundaries, roles and responsibilities in order for members to understand what is expected of them and carry out what is expected without undue interference while fostering enough intimate contact. When parents assume the responsibility for setting family rules, children are more able to develop autonomy.[163]

Overpermissiveness is a form of parental abandonment. "In system terms an overgiving, indulgent parenting amounts to 'tyranny of permissiveness,'" while "demanding and expecting responsibility from the child amount to the most crucial forms of giving on the part of parents".[164] Moreover, allowing children to witness honest disagreements between parents and see that not only do parents sometimes disagree but that they are able to struggle to work their way out of an argument and in the end renew their closeness, is an invaluable gift. The united front of "parental we-ness" does not allow the child to grow or learn how to deal with conflict.[165]

Adolescence and Separation

The separation process is most dramatically present and the parenting role is most directly confronted when a child reaches adolescence. The adolescent and her family recognize the need to redefine the adolescent's role

in the family, but don't know how, or what it should look like. The adolescent is childish and adultlike at the same time, and yet is neither one. Everyone is conscious of changes that are taking place inside and outside the family in relation to the child, but no one knows for sure what the end result will be. The adolescent begins to seek partners and values outside the family, sexual drives and needs intensify, certain intellectual functions and moral capacities mature, and there are shifts in loyalty.[166]

Emerging autonomy creates a rebalancing of loyalties. Rather than hold a primary and total loyalty to her family, she now spends a lot more time developing peer relationships. This is not the abandonment of loyalty to the family, but a postponed resolution during which the child's newly developing autonomy is balanced with more mature forms of gratitude repayment to the parents.

> Emancipation from the overdependence of childhood hinges on the success of the adolescent's attempts at rebalancing loyalty obligations. . . to achieve a new balance, a prolonged process of negotiation of compromises must take place between the adolescent and his parents. This process is often bypassed through acts which are expected to magically resolve the conflicts of emancipation. Sudden physical separation or the offering of exoneration through the adolescent's self-destructive behavior may have this meaning. Such precipitate acts becloud the issues, making the struggle for autonomy go underground and reappear later, when it is even more difficult to evaluate and balance obligations".[167]

There is disagreement about whether the adolescent separation is necessarily stormy. It is generally accepted that current Western society has not developed any clear functions and roles for adolescents, who feel out of

place in both the world of children and the world of adults. The inadequate support systems and the feeling of being in abeyance serve to exacerbate the adolescent's identity crisis.[168] But whether or not the adolescent's emotional turmoil is necessary or normal is not widely agreed upon. Minuchin states that the adolescent's and parent's demands conflict and mutual accommodation is needed but very difficult. While the child asks for new autonomy the parents establish new rules which the child has difficulty understanding and accepting. Clarity of communication becomes harder and harder to maintain as demands escalate on both sides.

> Parents cannot protect and guide without at the same time controlling and restricting. Children cannot grow and become individuated without rejecting and attacking. The process of socialization is inherently conflictual.[169]

Bowen, on the other hand, states:

> A better differentiated young person who began an orderly process of growing away from his parents in early childhood will continue a smooth and orderly growth process through the adolescent years. The adolescent period becomes a challenge and an opportunity to begin assuming responsibility for self, rather than a fight against the unresolved emotional attachment to parents.[170]

Problems arise, according to Bowen, when there are unresolved emotional attachments. Many adolescents then need to deny their attachment to their parents and assume extreme postures in order to pretend to be grown up. "The intensity of the denial and the pretending in adolescence is a remarkably accurate index of the dgree of unresolved emotional attachment to the parents".[171] In the schizophrenic family, the emotional fusion is so important to the family's

equilibrium that when the adolescent growth process disturbs it, the parents' emotional process tries to restore it while at the same time they verbally tell the child to be more grown up. It is an intensely anxious and binding process during which a helpless child becomes a poorly functioning young adult and then a helpless patient. When the parents became emotionally close and more invested in each other than in the patient, the patient begins to improve.[172]

Boszormenyi-Nagy sees guilt as a main dynamic of adolescent rebellion. When a child reaches adolescence and is trying to rebalance loyalties, very often the parents make the child feel especially conflicted and guilty by emphasizing her obligation toward her parents and minimizing her accountability to her peers. The child is made to think that loyalty to peers would automatically replace loyalty to one's family and the result is that she feels tremendous guilt and guilt-laden obligation. Growth and separation become guilt over abandoning the parents.[173]

The adolescent's failure in outside social involvements, such as school phobia, learning failure, and delinquency are often ways for the child to maintain loyalty to the family. In this way she resolves her guilt over leaving the family by not really leaving and by failing to succeed. There are also cases of negative loyalty commitment, where the adolescent becomes a delinquent in order to achieve any of a number of things, including bringing feuding parents together and diverting attention away from them, gratifying parents' parentifying and dependent needs, or reinforcing the family's feeling of togetherness by acting as the scapegoat.[174]

The Parent of the Adolescent: Mid-Life Crisis

The adolescent period is a difficult one for parents not only in terms of what the adolescent is going through, but also in regard to the parents' own developmental stage and needs. The adolescent is beginning to experience a peak period in terms of the intensification of drives, the growth of skills, and the new testing out of the world. At the same time, the parents of the adolescent are usually approaching or in the midst of middle-age. The developmental upswing which their children are experiencing corresponds with, for them, their developmental decline, and this difference makes apparent the conflict that so many middle-aged parents are feeling about their stage in life. "All these issues reflect a mid-life crisis which stirs because death draws closer".[175]

The ascension of the adolescent's life curve and drives is a constant reminder to the parents that theirs is descending. At this point in their lives, many parents feel at a dead-end; American society tends to foster this feeling of being stuck maritally and professionally. This is especially the case for women because so many have been defined by society through their role of mother (which at that point has less of a function). These women are left without a profession to fall back on for identity. There are few opportunities available or ways of changing their life style. Sometimes parents make an unfulfilling attempt to capture their youth instead of working towards enriching their middle-age. This is particularly the case for people who feel they never really lived their adolescence fully and are searching for the passion which they think accompanies that. Parents

tend then to feel conflict over whether to deepen existing loyalties and commitments or try and start new ones. Out of this ambivalence there has developed a runaway or drop-out culture for the middle-aged. Rather than working hard to reinforce and deepen their existing loyalties and commitments, these adults are perenially searching for something outside of themselves to fulfill them and make them young again, subtly encouraged in present day American society.[176]

Transactional Modes of the Separation Process

A parental mid-life crisis is thus often occurring at the same time the adolescent is attempting to individuate. The parent's and adolescent's developmental conflicts overlap and inter-react, affecting the parents' marriage and their relationship with their children. After many years of work with separating parents and adolescents, Helm Stierlin, a German psychiatrist, conducted a long-term study which focused on serious underachieving adolescents and their families. This led to his concomitant interest in the growing number of runaways and their family life. This in turn helped him formulate certain theories regarding the adolescent separation process, specifically the concept of centripetal and centrifigal forces and transactional modes. According to Stierlin, the parents' and adolescents' overlapping developmental processes can be usefully elaborated on in terms of the concept of centripetal and centrifigal forces.

> On all levels, the separation process is shaped by the interaction of centripetal and centrifigal forces which reveal a relational dialectic. A first level concerns the life situation and marriage of middle-aged parents. Where centripetal forces dominate, parents become glued to each other in suffocating closeness; where

> centrifigal forces prevail, the spouses can breathe more freely, but often become interpersonally dislodged and uprooted. The interplay of centripetal and centrifigal forces in marriage also shapes the separation between the generations.[177]

(An extreme example of centripetal conflict solution is pseudohostility and pseudomutuality, while a centrifugal one would be divorce.)[178]

> (Adolescence) brings the generations to a crisis point at which there unfolds the frama of centrifugal and centripetal forces, of push and pull, of attempted individuation and separation of mutual hurt and reconciliation. . .[179]

Stierlin has developed the concept of "transactional modes" in order to describe the way the centripetal-centrifugal process operates in terms of the intergenerational process of separation.

> These modes reflect the interplay and/or relative dominance of centripetal and centrifugal pushes between the generations. . . (operating) as the covert organizing transactional background to the more overt and specific child-parent interactions. When age-appropriate transactional modes are out of phase, too intense, or inappropriately mixed with other modes, the negotiation of a mutual individuation and separation between parent and child is impeded".[180]

Transactional modes are transitive (in that the child is still dependent and influenced by the parents who continue to shape the child's behavior) and reciprocal (the influence and shaping is a two-way process).[181]

There are three major transactional modes: binding, delegating and expelling. Each one reflects how the separation process evolves and what the adolescent has to do in order to individuate from the family. The binding mode is characterized by intense centripetal forces operating in the family. The family is seen as the only secure and gratifying place in a hostile world.

Parents in such a family deal with their own mid-life stage by drawing their children constantly closer to them in order to impede the separation process. There are three types of binding: affective, cognitive and exploitation of loyalty. Affective binding is characterized by the parent infantilizing the child by constantly trying to overgratify the child's regressive needs. Deaffirmation and mystification of communication are qualities of cognitive binding; the parent either injects meaning (disconfirming the child's meaning) or withholds meaning (the parent remains unsettlingly and powerfully silent). The exploitation of loyalty type of binding is exemplified by the parents who let the child know that they have lived only for their children and can't live without them.[182]

The delegating mode is characterized by parents who vacillate between centripetal and centrifugal forces. They feel deep-seated ambivalence and conflict about their developmental middle-aged crisis and subject their children to their indecision and the back and forth of the push and pull. The delegated child has been assigned the role of executing the parent's wishes and resolving their ambivalences. As such, the child is subject to loyalty conflicts (which parent to be loyal to) and mission conflicts (when the child is given incompatible missions to accomplish). There are three types of delegated missions all involving the child's interaction with peers as well as with the parents: those serving the parent's elementary affective needs (such as for thrills which the parents feel they missed as children); those serving the parent's ego (which is typified by either simple help, support and protection, information gathering, or protecting the parent's defensive system); those serving the parent's superego (child acts as either parent's ego ideal, parent's disowned "badness," or conscience).[183]

In the expelling mode the parents are so preoccupied with trying to solve their own crisis that they see the children as bothersome impediments. They therefore tend to speed up the natural centrifugal momentum of adolescence in order that the child physically separate more quickly.[184]

Parental binding, delegating and expelling have a legitimate place and function within the overall developmental process surrounding child-rearing. For instance, some degree of binding is important during the early stages of a child's life in order for the child to feel important and worthwhile, just as some delegating is needed after infancy and before and during adolescence, problems arising only if the parents aren't able to see the child as a separate person and burden her down with their own unresolved conflicts and desires. During the later stages of adolescence, the child needs some "benign neglect" or expelling in order to separate. Pathogenicity is often the result of binding occurring where expelling should, and vice versa.[185]

Adolescents who are intensely bound, delegated or expelled by their parents have a great deal of difficulty individuating and growing. Some have it worse than others; the kind of transactional mode assumed by the child's parents directly affects the way that child copes with adolescence and separating from the family. For instance, adolescents growing up within the binding mode tend to avoid their peers while intensely and continually depending on their parents. Conflict and painful struggle between the adolescents and their parents are signs that growth is possible. But when conflicts are avoided or prevented the adolescent generally either becomes submissive, numb or retreats into fantasy; these children often grow into schizophrenia. If they attempt to run away from home their attempts

are usually abortive (they either return home quickly or wander around in such a way that they are taken home quickly).[186]

There is more potential for growth within the delegating transactional mode than within the binding mode because of the necessary contact with peers (missions could not be accomplished without peer interaction). Peer contact gives the child some sense of reality and reality-testing situations. These adolescents are usually "crisis runaways," in that their running away generally reflects a crisis in their own and their parents' lives. They feel very conflicted about running away and usually either return home on their own or are forced to return home after a few days or weeks. Extremes of parental delegating, such as when the adolescent is given a mission which is impossible to accomplish or one which creates an extremely intense loyalty conflict, also lead to schizophrenia in a large number of cases. In such binding or delegating cases the child has become a specialist in "symbiotic survival".[187]

The adolescent who grows up within the expelling mode has a very different set of conditions to deal with than does the bound or delegated adolescent. For the expellee, the outside world and peers are counted on to satisfy her needs. She becomes prematurely autonomous. Because the commitment and relational bonds are so loose between the adolescent and parents, the child grows up seemingly without loyalty burdens. That doesn't mean their relationship is without conflict; conflict is often very bitter and intense. While learning how to separate fairly easily, the adolescent has a great deal of trouble forming deep, committed, caring human relationships. Expelled adolescents often run away casually and early without much commotion. Children who have been

expelled in an extreme sense (extremely neglected and rejected by their parents) often become wayward children. Without the experience of guilt and loyalty, they don't have the ability to develop a capacity for concern, or a sense of real importance, and are apt to glorify power and violence in a constant search for self-importance. They differ from the bound and delegated adolescent most strikingly in terms of never having felt important to any one parent.[188]

The Mutual Liberation of Parent and Child

What is to be done about the parents who are locked into their middle-age crisis and unable to cope constructively with their adolescent's impending separation? Stierlin suggests that such parents must learn how to master their crisis situation and liberate themselves. Such a liberation is described as mutual in that it frees both oneself and one's assumed exploiter (e.g., parent, spouse, child). Such mutual liberation requires that the parent reconcile what is referred to as doing and undergoing:

> Through doing, one asserts one's interests, shows initiative, stakes out one's goals, needs, and priorities. One asserts oneself as a center of executive, self-responsible action. Such doing implies owning--an owning not only of one's needs, intentions, and fantasies, but also of one's conflicts, one's ambivalences, one's dark sides, one's deficiencies, one's failures for which one assumes responsibility. Owning, thus understood, means pain of the kind which accompanies true growth.
>
> Undergoing implies an ability and willingness to be affected by the other and to be receptive to his or her needs, wishes, and growth--even when this other is experienced as oppressor or exploiter.[189]

Parents' liberation can be accomplished through their work on their relationship with their parents, their marriage or their adolescent children. In the first case parents are encouraged to work through their own boundness, delegation or explusion from their parents. The reconciliation of doing and undergoing occurs as the parents are able to assert themselves and their needs and goals, apart from those of their parents, while at the same time owning to their shortcomings, obligations and ambivalent feelings. Undergoing means that the parents remain affected by and connected to their parents and can accept what they became through them.[190] Liberation through work on their marital relationship is best exemplified by the centripetally deadlocked marriage which improves through the emergence of a multigenerational way of seeing things. The parents begin to recognize that their expectations of each other and their way of relating are based on and emanate from the way that they had been bound or delegated by their parents.[191]

In dealing with their separation from their adolescent children, parents sometimes have a last chance to work out their relationship with their own parents. Their liberation through their work on their relationship with their adolescent children also occurs within a multigenerational perspective:

> Parents and adolescent children must also here reconcile doing and undergoing. In doing, parents assert their interests and convictions, take responsibility for their actions and obligations, "own" their failures and deficiencies, and, most important, own the conflicts and ambivalences that mark their middle-age crisis, which they so far disowned by binding or delegating their children. In undergoing, parents open themselves

> to their children's true needs, interests, and messages, and thereby use the opportunity offered them by the latter to gain new freedom and leverage for resolving their crisis of middle age.[192]

Upon refusing to be bound or delegated, the adolescent helps the parents make connections between what their parents did to them and how they have been relating to their children. The parent will feel both sad and relieved, and better able to understand and individuate from the child.[193]

According to Stierlin, the mutual liberation of the generations can occur when the conflict between the generations is changed into a "loving fight" "wherein the parties, instead of trying to devastate each other, affirm each other's right to exist".[194] The process looks like the following:

> First, the two parties must strive to differentiate and to articulate their differing needs and interests. From a position of "articulate separateness," they must be able and willing to share a common focus of attention and ensure an ongoing communication and relatedness. Such ongoing communication on the basis of articulate separateness differs from the blurry, sticky boundness found in families with schizophrenic offspring, but it also differs from the alienation and breakdown of communication found in many expelling, centrifigal relationships.
>
> A loving fight implies, second, a deepening awareness of the parties' interdependence and mutual obligations. Such awareness can counteract each party's pursuit of self-interest and power. It balances self-assertive "doing" with other--oriented "undergoing."
>
> Third, a loving fight, in reconciling doing and undergoing for each party, promotes each party's repair work. . . . It allows for a three-dimensionality of liberation that, ideally, can include the parents' parents and the children's as yet unborn children.[195]

In the next two chapters the conceptual framework drawn from family systems theory is applied to an analysis of alternative education. A conceptual model for evaluating and understanding alternative school process is developed from that framework and presented. Chapter III offers a discussion of the alternative school as family system and Chapter IV describes the alternative school's therapeutic process, concepts of health and pathology in the school, and the adolescent separation process in the school.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Murray Bowen, "Family Therapy After Twenty Years," Unedited draft of chapter for handbook of psychiatry, (n.d.), pp. 1-3.

[2]Murray Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," Comprehensive Psychology 7:345-374, 1966; in Changing Families, edited by Jay Haley (Grune and Stratton, 1971), pp. 169-161.

[3]Bowen, "Family Therapy After Twenty Years," p. 6.

[4]Salvador Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 129, 179.

[5]Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, Invisible Loyalties (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 254.

[6]Ibid., p. 167.

[7]Ibid., p. 174.

[8]Ibid., p. 5.

[9]Ibid., p. 94.

[10]Ibid., p. 171.

[11]Ibid., Chapter 7.

[12]Ibid., p. 60.

[13]Ibid., p. 168.

[14]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, p. 40.

[15]Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," p. 166.

[16]Boszormenyi-Nagy, Invisible Loyalties, p. 2.

[17]Ibid., pp. 11, 17.

[18]Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," p. 167.

[19]Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 19.

[20]Helm Stierlin, Separating Parents and Adolescents (New York: Quadrangle, New York Times Book Co., 1974), p. 8.

[21]Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 24.

[22]Ibid., p. 34.

[23]Ibid., p. 19.

[24]Stierlin, pp. 7-8.

[25]Boszormenyi-Nagy, pp. 6-7.

[26]Ibid., p. 9.

[27]Murray Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Family of Origin," Georgetown Family Symposia, Vol. I, a collection of selected papers, 1971-1972, p. 85.

[28]Minuchin, p. 52.

[29]Salvador Minuchin, "Structural Family Therapy" in Silvano Arienti (Ed.), American Handbook of Psychiatry Vol. 2 (New York: Basic Books, 1974), p. 180.

[30]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, p. 53.

[31]Ibid., pp. 52-53.

[32]Ibid., p. 54.

[33]Ibid., pp. 53-57.

[34]Ibid., p. 57.

[35]Ibid., pp. 57-60.

[36]Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," p. 169.

[37]Ibid., p. 172.

[38]Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 181.

[39]Ibid., p. 2.

[40]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, p. 51; Minuchin, "Structural Family Therapy", p. 179.

[41]Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Family of Origin," p. 80-85.

[42]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, p. 51.

[43]Ibid., pp. 51-53.

[44]Minuchin, "Structural Family Therapy", pp. 179-180.

[45]Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Family of Origin", p. 83; Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Own Family", pp. 123-125; Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," p. 172.

[46]Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Own Family," p. 123-124; Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Family of Origin," p. 20, 16-17; Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in Administration Systems," pp. 186-187.

[47]Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 51.

[48]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, pp. 51; 65-66.

[49]Ibid., p. 46.

[50]Ibid., op. 51-66.

[51]Boszormenyi-Nagy, Invisible Loyalties, p. 32.

[52]Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," pp. 171-176.

[53]Boszormenyi=Nagy, p. 51.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid, p. 25.

[56]Ibid., p. 37.

[57]Ibid., pp. 39-40.

[58]Ibid., p. 105.

[59]Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[60]Ibid., p. 43.

[61]Ibid., p. 43.

[62]Ibid., p. 45.

[63]Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[64]Ibid., p. 53.

[65]Ibid., p. 54.

[66]Ibid., p. 86.

[67]Ibid., pp. 66-67; 86-87.

[68]Ibid., p. 59.

[69]Ibid., pp. 25-27; 53-55.

[70]Ibid., p. 55.

[71]Ibid., p. 34.

[72]Ibid., pp. 55-58, 67.

[73]Ibid., p. 58.

[74]Ibid., p. 79.

[75]Minuchin, "Structural Family Therapy," pp. 184-185.

[76]Ibid., pp. 185-191.

[77]Ibid., p. 183.

[78]Ibid., p. 182; Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, p. 129.

[79]Minuchin, Ibid., pp. 129-132.

[80]Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 16.

[81]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, pp. 132-133.

[82]Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 195.

[83]Ibid., p. 198.

[84]Ibid., p. xv.

[85]Ibid., p. 199.

[86]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, p. 119.

[87]Ibid., p. 119.

[88]Ibid., pp. 2, 9.

[89]Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," pp. 185-189.

[90]Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 41.

[91]Ibid., p. 378.

[92]Ibid., pp. 20, 129-130.

[93]Minuchin, "Structural Family Therapy," p. 178.

[94]Boszormenyi-Nagy, pp. 20, 5.

[95]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, pp. 51-60.

[96]Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," pp. 184-185.

[97]Ibid., pp. 168-169; Bowen, "Structural Family Therapy," p. 179.

[98]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, p. 111.

[99]Ibid., pp. 138-157.

[100]Ibid., pp. 123-129.

[101]Ibid., pp. 133-137.

[102] Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Own Family," pp. 125-127.

[103] Ibid., pp. 126-127.

[104] Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 94.

[105] Ibid.,pp. 140-142.

[106] Ibid., pp. 92-95.

[107] Ibid., p. 179.

[108] Ibid., p. 93.

[109] Ibid., p. 91.

[110] Ibid., p. 91.

[111] Ibid., p. 368.

[112] Ibid., p. 13.

[113] Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in Ones Own Family," pp. 137-138.

[114] Murray Bowen, "A Family Concept of Schizophrenia," in Donald D. Jackson (Ed.), The Etiology of Schizophrenia (New York: Basic Books, 1960), pp. 352, 365.

[115] Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 2.

[116] Ibid., pp. xx, 101.

[117] Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, pp. 179-180.

[118] Ibid., p. 60.

[119]Ibid., pp. 53-60.

[120]Ibid., pp. 60-66.

[121]Ibid., p. 60.

[122]Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 103.

[123]Murray Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Own Family," p. 139.

[124]Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 250.

[125]Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Family of Origin," p. 85.

[126]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, p. 95.

[127]Boszormenyi-Nagy, pp. 103-104.

[128]Ibid., p. 46.

[129]Ibid., pp. 24, 36.

[130]Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," pp. 171-172.

[131]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, pp. 54-56.

[132]Boszormenyi-Nagy, pp. 379, 382.

[133]Ibid., pp. 219-221.

[134]Ibid., p. 265.

[135]Ibid., pp. 220-221.

[136]Ibid., p. 253.

[137] Ibid., p. 254.

[138] Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, p. 241.

[139] Ibid., pp. 240-243.

[140] Boszormenyi-Nagy, pp. 24, 36, 103.

[141] Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, pp. 51-60.

[142] Stierlin, p. 3.

[143] Boszormenyi-Nagy, pp. 18-19.

[144] Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, pp. 120-122.

[145] Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 160.

[146] Ibid., pp. 105-106.

[147] Ibid., p. 4.

[148] Ibid., pp. 20-21.

[149] Ibid., p. 47.

[150] Ibid., p. 254.

[151] Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Family of Origin," pp. 81-88.

[152] Ibid., p. 83.

[153] Ibid., p. 82.

[154]Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," pp. 173, 13.

[155]Ibid., pp. 173-176.

[156]Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Family of Origin," pp. 82-83.

[157]Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Own Family," pp. 121-122.

[158]Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," pp. 184-185; Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Own Family," pp. 140-141, 163.

[159]Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 87.

[160]Ibid., p. 86.

[161]Ibid., p. 248.

[162]Ibid., pp. 248-249.

[163]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, pp. 54-59.

[164]Boszormenyi-Nagy, pp. 135-136.

[165]Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Own Family," pp. 142-143; Boszormenyi-Nagy, pp. 58, 147.

[166]Stierlin, pp. 10-11.

[167]Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 107.

[168]Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy, p. 50.

[169]Ibid., p. 58.

[170] Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Family of Origin," p. 85.

[171] Ibid., p. 85.

[172] Bowen, "A Family Concept of Schizophrenia," pp. 366-370.

[173] Boszormenyi-Nagy, pp. 64-65; 138-139.

[174] Ibid., pp. 155, 128-129.

[175] Stierlin, p. 23.

[176] Ibid., pp. 24-31.

[177] Ibid., p. xii.

[178] Ibid., pp. 31-34.

[179] Ibid., p. 134.

[180] Ibid., p. 35.

[181] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

[182] Ibid., pp. 36-51.

[183] Ibid., pp. 51-66.

[184] Ibid., pp. 66-74.

[185] Ibid., pp. 124-127.

[186] Ibid., pp. 108-111, 14-15, 128-131.

[187] Ibid., pp. 112-117; 18-21; 127-128; 132-133.

[188] Ibid., pp. 117-120; 66-74; 150-162.

[189] Ibid., p. 166.

[190] Ibid., pp. 168-171.

[191] Ibid., pp. 171-173.

[192] Ibid., p. 174.

[193] Ibid., pp. 173-176.

[194] Ibid., 181.

[195] Ibid., pp. 181-182.

CHAPTER III

THE SCHOOL AS FAMILY SYSTEM

The purpose of Chapters Three and Four is to apply family systems theory as conceptualized in Chapter Two to alternative education. Family systems theory is used to analyze the underlying educational process and present a descriptive model for an alternative school as a family system. Chapter Three specifically delineates and defines the system characteristics inherent to the alternative school. The properties of the school as family system are described in terms of applications (of the theory to alternative education) as follows:

Application #1: The general dialectical system dynamics, multi-generational context, and assumed roles in the school as family system.

Application #2: The function and composition of the systems and subsystems.

Application #3: Relational components, including transactional patterns and triangulation.

Application #4: The school's and subsystems' interrelated developmental processes.

Application #5: The purpose and constitution of rituals.

Application #6: The multigenerational ledger of justice and loyalty obligations.

When applicable, examples will be drawn from the first three years of the King Philip School to further demonstrate how the family system process operates within an alternative school framework.

At the time of this writing there are no references known to the author establishing the connection between family process dynamics and alternative school dynamics. One of the most applicable studies is a paper entitled "Toward the Differentiation of Self in Administrative Systems" by Murray Bowen.[1] In that paper, Bowen discusses his application of family systems theory to his work as head of the Family Section in the Department of Psychiatry at Georgetown University Medical Center and describes his own efforts at differentiating from those he worked with and supervised there, and the rationale behind it. He comments on the need for articulating particular work situation experiences in family process terms in order for people involved in such organizations to be able to work more productively and smoothly with one another. A goal is to see how organizational emotional issues are very similar to family emotional issues in the way in which they are expressed and handled. Bowen notes that the Georgetown Family Faculty and various other family training programs he was involved in are:

> most vulnerable to becoming involved in all kinds of emotional alliances and intense emotional processes that would make it more like a family. A good percentage of such organizations do not continue for many months or many years before

> there are major splits and disruptions in the central organization, just as there are in poorly differentiated families.[2]

In another relevant paper entitled "Family Systems Model in Organizational Consultation: Vignettes of Consultation to a Day-Care Center",[3] Sally Minard uses family systems theory in order to understand the identified dysfunctional behavior in a child attending a day-care center. She focuses on the interpersonal dynamics of the day-care center, rather than the acting-out behavior of the individual child and shows how the child's behavior was related to a tension within the entire system at the center.[4]

It is not being posited here that a work relationship system is a "family," but rather that underlying dynamics are similar to those of a family system. As Bowen notes:

> . . . differentiation of self principles apply in all areas of relationships whether it be within the family, or in social or work relationships. . . .
>
> Basic relationship patterns developed for adapting to the parental family in childhood are used in all other relationships throughout life. The basic patterns in social and work relationships are identical to relationship patterns in the family, except in intensity. Overall, the emotional process in social and work systems is less intense than in the original family. However, there are exceptions to this in which the intensity of relationships in work systems approximates the intensity in the original family.[5]

Therefore, it follows that basic principles of family therapy can be appropriately applied to such work system relationships in order to isolate and confront emotional issues which may be interfering with the functioning of such a group of work-related individuals.

It is the contention of this study that the family systems approach is particularly applicable to alternative education because of the high level investment and commitment which most people involved can feel towards one another and towards the existence and the development of the school itself (Dennison, 1970; O'Gorman, 1972). Although there may be secure funding, a clear operating philosophy, a well-defined structure and a sound academic and experiential curriculum, there are often conflicts and disagreements which impede its progress. It is the strong commitment and the intense emotional involvement which may enable the alternative school to succeed in its overt objectives and which at the same time creates the problems which can lead to its disintegration. It is the task of this study to present a model framework which can be used to analyze and explain that underlying process so that its productive and positive aspects can be reinforced and its destructive tendencies curbed.

Application #1: The alternative school is similar to a family system in that it functions dialectically as a system composed of mutually interdependent units, assigning family roles to its members. This section describes: the basic system dynamics operant in the school within a multigenerational context and concomitant loyalty implications; the dialectical systemic homeostasis of the system; and the congruence between roles assumed in the family and those assumed in the school.

Operating as a system, the emotional state of any one individual in an alternative school exerts a direct influence on everyone else in the system

(due to physical and emotional proximity). This composite of interlocking relationships which constitutes the system of the alternative school is also affected by outside systems and the context within which it operates. That is, regardless of its attitude towards the outside world, it is directly and indirectly continually influenced by the surrounding community and its various subsystems (e.g., the public school, police department, local newspaper, social service agencies, local government). This may occur either through direct dependence or confrontation, or less apparent disregard.

The process by which the internal elements of the system affect one another and in turn are affected by external systems is dialectical. There is a sense of mutual influence, internally and externally and between the internal and external, which ensures that such a system will continually be evolving. The dialectical process is not restricted to mutual influence, but is also moving continually to a new level. Classically, each thesis is affected by its antithesis which together evolve into a synthesis (of the thesis and antithesis). That synthesis in turn has an antithesis which again forms a new synthesis. In that fashion the process is always in movement and transition. No one person and no one system exists in isolation. A dysfunction in the system is not caused by a single event or even a series of causally related events, but rather is a product of the dynamics of the system itself. It is a recognition of the constantly evolving existential, interpersonal struggle to make sense out of life. It becomes particularly apparent in an alternative school which tends to pay attention to that struggle.

Just as a family system seeks to conserve and perpetuate itself while constantly evolving in a dialectical fashion, so does the alternative school. The school is a system which attempts to reach a homeostasis, and that homeostasis is always transitional to the next level of homeostasis. That movement helps ensure that it does not stagnate, but instead is always evolving along with the lives of those within it. The movement towards a balanced homeostasis is an expression of the student's and staff's allegiance to the school and its continued existence. The effort which goes into making the school what those involved want it to be is a means of both working through their own interpersonal and family issues and developing the ability to responsibly sustain a commitment. It is also a means of preserving something that is very important to them.

The dialectical process within the school is further enriched and complicated by the fact that each individual brings to the school her own multi-generational background. It isn't simply a matter of disparate individuals (and systems) exerting an influence on one another and reacting to those influences. Each individual brings her own history and culture, and unresolved family issues to the school. Alternative schools often try to operate collaboratively thus creating more opportunity for multigenerational styles to conflict. For instance, an argument between two students over their different ways of approaching a project may in fact conceal a loyalty issue towards their respective families. In other words, each person adamantly adheres to her own way of doing something because her family does it that way, and relates

to people in the school in the same manner she relates to her family. She is thereby expressing loyalty to her family compensating for some dynamic which is idiosyncratic to her family system. Thus it is not necessarily each individual student arguing but two family systems and obligations at war.

Often a student will use the same tactics to preserve the school that she uses when she feels insecure about her family. For instance, in a family in which the parents aren't getting along together a child may become disruptive and engage in some kind of persistent acting-out behavior in order to call attention to a family dysfunction. That is a role which that child has learned within the family and which is often subtly reinforced by the family. That same child, when sensing some intense conflict between two staff members in her school may resort to acting out in the school in order to call attention to the staff issue. A school which is not attuned to those dynamics would tend to regard the student's behavior solely as an indication of the student having a "problem," rather than seeing it as a reaction to a dysfunction in the system and her attempt at preserving it.

For example, in the fall of 1976 King Philip was having a lot of trouble adjusting to a new director. There seemed to be varying levels of conflict among students, among staff, and between staff and students. The most overt conflict was among the students who tended to express their insecurity and fear concerning the existence of the school by being abusive to one another. The staff blamed the conflictual atmosphere primarily on the new director's inability to set appropriate and consistent limits and boundaries with the students, and to

develop a sense of trust and community. Those factors were important, but other factors also were contributing to the tension in the school. Another major issue was evidenced during a lengthy, weekly student-staff group meeting. During this particular meeting there was a discussion of "school vibes" (how people were getting along with one another). The staff was maintaining that the students needed to pull together and help get the school through the difficult transitional stage it was going through. In the middle of a non-productive discussion, one student said, "I don't know what you're talking about. It's a staff issue." There was silence. What that student was pointing out was that the students' acting-out behavior was a reaction to conflict between the staff and the director. The staff and the new director were in constant (though not always overt) disagreement over how the school should be run, which stemmed from both a disagreement about particular policy issues, and unresolved loyalty ties towards the prior director and the resistance to someone new coming in. The staff and director had called attention to those dynamics (a new director is similar to a step-parent and is resisted in similar ways) in terms of the students' relationship to the director but had failed to see how it was affecting them in somewhat the same way. In addition to their own feelings, the students had recognized the staffs' feelings and were acting out in order to express the fact that the school was in trouble.

Thus, it can be seen how issues similar to those which arise within the family also operate in the alternative school setting (e.g., familial, inter-generational, and group loyalty ties and role performance) mutually influencing

one another. The next section applies those general family system dynamics which are at work in the school to a more explicit analysis of the structure and functioning of the subsystems.

Application #2: The alternative school, as a family, is a system reacting to other systems and composed of smaller subsystems within which members learn interpersonal relationship skills and differentiated tasks and roles. In this section the school as family system is described in terms of the composition, structure and dynamics of the following subsystems of which it is composed (using examples from King Philip):

1. Within the school: (a) director, family therapist, students and staff subsystems; (b) parental, marital, sibling and extended family subsystems.
2. Within the staff subsystem: parental, marital and sibling subsystems.
3. Adjunct subsystems: students' families and governing structure.

The family system dynamics which operate in the school establish the interactional patterns within and between the subsystems. As is the case in the family, in order for the subsystems in the alternative school to function effectively and for the individuals to be able to interpersonally interact and differentiate smoothly, there have to be clear boundaries around subsystems and appropriate communication patterns between them. The way in which subsystems function and through their relationship with each other, the student's ability to jointly sustain interdependency and autonomy is thereby often either fostered or impeded.

Within the school there are two major interrelated sets of subsystems. Each set is composed of the members of the school in a different configuration. The difference between them is how the members' relationship to one another and roles are defined. The first set is composed of the students and the staff hierarchy. The second is delineated in terms of parental, marital, sibling and extended family. Examples of adjunct sets of subsystems may consist of such groups as the students' families and the Governing Board of the school. The actual number and composition of the subsystems is dependent on the size and structure of the school. They will tend to mirror the roles and lines of authority, and be a good indication of how the structure actually operates.

At King Philip the first set was composed of four subsystems: students, staff, director, and family therapist. (Within the staff there were two subsystems: salaried staff and volunteer or student teachers.) Adjunct subsystems consisted of the families of the students (as primarily organized within the bi-weekly multiple-family group) and the Governing Board. There were usually a dozen students. The first year there were nine very part-time volunteer staff (including family therapist), and one paid full-time staff member and the director. The second year there were three full-time salaried staff, usually three part-time volunteers, the director and part-time salaried family therapist. The Governing Board was initially composed only of community representatives and during the first two years evolved through many stages to become composed of individuals from the staff (including director), students, and families. The number of families directly involved varied. Generally, nine families participated in a

fairly consistent manner (with the school's continual follow-up and encouragement).

The composition of that first set of subsystems is a good indicator of how certain aspects of the school were organized, such as: school decision making, the curriculum organization, the degree of differentiation of roles, the method of internal governance (including discipline), and the overall degree of rigidity or flexibility. For instance, on the one hand, a school which maintains that there are no subsystems because everyone is an equal part of the school's community, implies that all those aspects of school organization are shared as equally as possible. On the other hand, there is the school which sees almost each individual staff member as a separate subsystem with a distinct job description which does not overlap with any other role in the school, and is also clearly differentiated from the role of the students. The organization of such a school implies a very different, hierarchical structure. This is purely theoretical, for in practice it is doubtful that either of these two extremes actually operates as stated. An outside observer in either instance will often be able to discern how the school actually operates by clarifying the subsystems' composition and how in practice they operate together.

The division of King Philip into the four subsystems of director, family therapist, teachers, and students, and their respective function, signifies certain features about the school. The fact that the director and the family therapist were separate from the teachers indicates that there were explicit differences in roles. The director was ultimately responsible for the school's administration, and making sure that everything got done that needed to be done. The director also

delegated various responsibilities (other than teaching) to the teachers based on each individual teacher's abilities and interests, not on the basis of a pre-determined job description. It was the responsibility of the director to make final decisions concerning important school policy matters, but the process which led to the final decisions invariably included all the teachers (and also students and families when appropriate). Staff meetings, student-staff meetings and family meetings were all carefully considered. No major decisions were made in isolation. The family therapist was responsible for the multiple-family group, processing the staff and student-staff meetings, and student and family therapy.

There were also some areas of overlap in roles. The director was also a teacher (English and reading) as was the family therapist (psychology). The director also co-led the multiple-family group meetings and sometimes acted as co-therapist in family therapy sessions. Some of the overlapping came from necessity, and some came from a policy decision based on what was felt to be the best way to run a school. For instance, the fact that both the director and family therapist also taught classes stemmed from the belief that every staff member should have teaching responsibilities because it allowed for a specific and valuable kind of contact with the students. But the director's assumption of parts of other roles (such as work with the families) and all the administrative duties, resulted from both the director's own interests and the school's small budget which if larger, would have included additional positions for some of these responsibilities. The above description provides a very brief description

of the structure as seen through certain subsystem delineations. The underlying process and most particularly the lives of students, are analyzed more substantially in following sections. The intention here was to give a basic idea of how those subsystems may operate.

The structure of the second set of subsystems, however, provides a more useful interpretation of the total process of the school. By conceptualizing the school as divided into such family subsystems as parental, marital, sibling and extended family, the interpersonal dynamics underlying the more cursory, exterior structurings can be gleaned. It is those dynamics which provide the school with the overall tone and texture which determine how well it functions. At King Philip the parental subsystem was composed of the director, sometimes in conjunction with the family therapist; the students were the sibling subsystem; and various staff members assumed the extended family roles. The part-time volunteer staff members who were successful were often similar to older cousins in that they didn't have the authority of a parent or even an aunt or uncle. They were not as intimate a member of the family system, and yet were not peers of the students. Those volunteers who did not work out were usually inappropriately trying to be part of the sibling subsystem (and couldn't differentiate from the student role). The full-time salaried staff were generally like close aunts and uncles. They weren't directly as responsible for the students as the director (parental subsystem) and did not do as much outright disciplining, but had a good deal of authority in their direct dealings with them. As aunts and uncles they were of an older generation but they did not have to be quite as strict and were entitled

to certain informalities of casualness which is not as appropriate in the parental role. In this sense, the director, family therapist and staff composed a sibling subsystem.

The role of director of the school can be viewed as similar to that of mother (or father) of a family. As such the director/mother ought to provide the school with the kind of leadership, guidance, authority, nurturance and warmth which would create a secure and comfortable environment conducive to everyone's growth and maturation. Such a dependable environment would allow and encourage both the staff to be effective in their roles, and the students to feel safe enough to attempt to be more interpersonally accommodating and autonomous. Moreover, the school would act as a model to the students and their families of how a well-functioning family system operates. The role of director is clearly of paramount importance. In order to be effective in this very difficult role and not become enmeshed in the system which is being created, the director needs to have worked through enough issues of differentiation and loyalty in her own family of origin and feel comfortable and confident in the role. If not, the director will be unwittingly fulfilling her own unresolved needs at the expense of the school and will not be able to separate all the complex dynamics which are present.

The parental and extended family subsystems need to have time together which is separate from the students, just as adults in a family need a similar distance and separateness from the children on occasion. It allows for the subsystems to be able to operate independently of one another so that they

won't become inappropriately dependent. It is those boundaries between subsystems which protect the differentiation process. In the case of the sibling subsystem (the students) it allows them to develop peer relationships and decision making skills, and to test out their newly emerging identities without undue interference from the parental subsystem. At the same time, the parents and extended family adults are permitted time alone to enrich their relationships with one another so that they don't become increasingly dependent on their children for satisfaction and fulfillment.

There is often another less obvious set of subsystems which is located within the staff hierarchy; it is a mini-system made up of the parental, marital and sibling subsystems composed of staff members. At King Philip within that context the director (often in conjunction with the family therapist) composed the parental (and marital) subsystem, while other members of the staff composed a sibling subsystem. This system was most obviously operant when different staff members would compete for the director's approval. For instance, an argument occurring in the director's presence between two staff members overtly concerning a division of responsibilities or the completion of a task, could also sometimes be seen as two siblings attempting to gain recognition for their accomplishments. There were times at King Philip when tension seemed to be mounting for no reason that was apparent to anyone, but when the situation was further reconstructed those dynamics became evident. An example of such an instance occurred when two such teachers and the director were sitting in the office discussing the day, after school had ended. The evident petulance between

the two did not seem to relate to the content of the discussion. One teacher was acting irritated towards the other, who then reciprocated. After talking for a while (and focussing on the interpersonal undercurrents) one said that she had felt that the director had been spending more time with the other and ignoring her, which she had mistakenly taken as disapproval. That kind of "sibling rivalry" among staff is not necessary within the school, but is an indication that there are poorly differentiated individuals serving as staff members, and the potential for that kind of conflict is therefore present. In other words, there is a difference between healthy role flexibility and dysfunctional role diffuseness. In this instance, the staff evidently had not clearly differentiated from their own siblings in their families of origin. Therefore, those unsettled differentiation issues were transferred to the school setting. Some flexibility of roles is important, but in this case they were inappropriate, and potentially destructive. Those kinds of incidents were not common, but when present were very subtle and hard to discuss. In practice, when working out a conflict, it was not explicitly labelled "sibling rivalry." Instead, the focus was on helping the staff members to recognize and articulate their dependence on the director's approval and its repercussions. What was important was the attempt made to understand the patterns and prevent them from being reinforced and continuing unchecked. Those kinds of incidents can become fairly common; people who are not highly differentiated easily slide comfortably into such roles. Recognizing and discussing them prevents the incidents which express the unresolved tensions from being common, constant occurrences.

The configurations of the family model subsystems will differ from school to school depending on a number of variables, including such things as the school's operating structure, individual character traits and abilities, and the size and goals of the school. But regardless of any of those characteristics, such dimensions as the clarity of functions within each subsystem, the boundaries around each, and the way in which lines of authority operate between them, are constants in determining the quality of interactions in the school. While this section described the structure and composition of the subsystems within the school and the family system dynamics characterizing their operation and interrelationships, the next section specifically discusses the transactional patterns and triangulation process within and between the subsystem.

Application #3: The family process dynamics are articulated within the alternative school through transactional patterns or sets, and the triangling process. The following is an analysis of: the implicit and explicit messages conveyed through transactional patterns; the characteristics of functional as opposed to dysfunctional transactional patterns in the school; the way in which emotional relationships are expressed through triangulation; and the differentiation and detriangling process.

Within the context of the school, transactional patterns define how people relate to one another and what the mutual expectations are. For example, when a teacher tells a student to come to class and the student obeys, they are confirming some of the obligations and expectations within their current relationship

at the school. Those behavior patterns within the school are determined by the stated rules and structure within the school and also the often unstated, less clearly defined expectations or spirit of the school. The former is acknowledged and accepted verbally by every entering student, but the latter can only be learned in the process of being a member of the school. This is similar to a new child in a family who learns not only what her parents specifically state are her responsibilities to the family, but also those that go unstated. The stated conflicting with the unstated, and expectations which the child cannot actually fulfill, are examples of how dysfunctional transactional patterns develop within a disturbed family system.

At King Philip, dysfunctional transactional patterns were often symptomatic of a blurring between the subsystem boundaries, or an individual being blamed for a systems issue. Such an instance occurred a number of times when new staff were unsure of their role (especially younger volunteers or student teachers) and gave students mixed signals concerning their relationship. On the one hand they demanded respect and held an air of authority, but at the same time joked casually about each other's personal lives outside the school and tried to become falsely and superficially intimate. In order to make sense out of the situation and more clearly define the parameters of their relationship, the student would then proceed to test out the teacher. The student would often do this by suggesting that they do something together like go drinking or the student would cut class, giving the teacher an obviously inadequate excuse (intimating that since they are friends, the student does not have to play the student role). This tended to confuse and

then threaten the teacher who didn't really know how to handle the effect her double messages were having on the student. At that point she would then get angry at the student for not following "school rules," when in fact she had created the conditions which invariably led to such a confrontation. A person only hearing the last part (how the student "disobeyed") would tend to see it as a simple issue and automatically discipline the student. But the situations which preceded that end conflict actually precipitated the conflict; those are the dynamics which are often ignored because they are almost impossibly difficult to express or interpret.

Another problem common to biological family systems and family system dynamics within the alternative school concerns triangulation. It is the role of the family therapist to point out such dynamics, and it is the role of the director to be aware of the patterns. The director is often one of the people who the other two in the immediate triangle often attempt to include. Therefore, the director must always remain outside in order to be able to clearly see the emotional system and how it operates so that she can make sure she does not allow herself to become a part of it. If she is a part of it then she tends to reinforce those patterns and must remove herself in order to change the part that she has been playing in it. As an intrinsic part of the system, the director cannot always remove herself, nor is it desirable. Such continual distancing implies an isolation which would make the director ineffective. Thus, a balance between involvement and distance is sought.

In alternative schools the intense, daily emotional involvement that people have in each other's lives is a natural precondition for extensive triangulation.

It is the way that the emotional alliances and rejections are often expressed. The triangling process is learned most often in one's family of origin, and those learned emotional patterns and responses are then transferred to the school environment. If it is one of the objectives of the school to help individuals reach a higher level of differentiation of self, then concomitantly they must also work at detriangling. Because triangling is automatic and common to primary relationships, the first task is to be cognizant of the dynamics. That in itself is very difficult. A next step is for each person to understand how they are contributing to the further existence of the triangle and then to move out of the arena. In that way the triangle cannot function. One individual, preferably the director, should act as a model and continually work at detriangling.

One way of seeing King Philip is as a series of interlocking triangles. During calm periods the school functioned smoothly, but during stressful periods the triangulation sometimes became intense. In such instances, anxiety located in any one triangle created a chain reaction effect in continguous triangles. For example, at one time there were two staff members (referred to here as Bob and Mary) who were continually on the verge of beginning an intimate relationship. Bob often felt rejected by Mary when he made overtures. This resulted in tension between them and attempts to include a third person in the emotional system. For instance, one day the two teachers were driving a group of students back from a field trip. One of the students in the car was reading a Playboy magazine, smirking and laughing with the others in the back seat. Bob over-reacted and exploded at the student. Mary harshly criticized Bob in front of the students.

Intense triangulation occurred between Bob, Mary and the student. The apparent issue was the Playboy magazine; the underlying issue was Bob's and Mary's relationship. The result was that others in the car started taking sides and soon it had become a school problem, with interlocking triangles emanating from the poles of the original one.

The director, by remaining neutral, was able to work with the primary triangle on detriangling. This was done a little while after they had all returned from the car ride and the dynamics became apparent. First she joined Bob and the student and then she joined Bob and Mary. In each case the emphasis was on sustaining a neutral position and creating a safe arena within which each person could calmly express him or herself and reduce the emotional tension. The tension was not removed, but was lessened enough so that it did not spread any farther. When others in the school felt the emotional anxiety was substantially lower, they did not continue to take sides and exacerbate it. The detriangling process in the primary triangle was instrumental in effecting a detriangling process in the contiguous triangles.

The detriangling process briefly described here is difficult and complex, as is the attempt at recognizing and transforming dysfunctional transactional patterns. The next section describes how the family system dynamics discussed in this and the previous two sections give substance and direction to the school's developmental process.

Application #4: The relationships inside and between the school's subsystems as expressed through transactional patterns constitute the developmental stages of the school. In this section the alternative school's developmental process is discussed in terms of:

1. The developmental processes within these subsystems: staff, students, and families.
2. The developmental process of the school in itself.
3. The relationship between #1 and #2.

The school itself and its various subsystems are characterized by separate developmental processes which continually influence each other. The staff, the students and the students' families are all undergoing their own developmental subsystem processes, but not exclusively of one another. The developmental process of the school exists in itself and is at the same time composed of the processes of its subsystems. That is, it exists in and of itself while at the same time is continually made up of and interacting with all of its components. In that sense it is dialectical; the process is continually in tension with itself, evolving towards a new transitional homeostasis.

It is difficult to discuss the developmental process of any one subsystem in isolation from the others and apart from the whole because of the influence they have on one another. The factors that differentiate one from another are most clearly evident in terms of the age-phase of each. At King Philip, the student subsystem was composed of adolescents, the staff subsystem of adults essentially

in their 20's and 30's, and the families subsystem was eharaeterized by parents of at least one adolescent. Eaeh subsystem was going through transformations appropriate to their own stage of life and in eonstant interaetion with the others. While the students were going through their own adolescent growth and turmoil, their parents were encountering or approaehing middle-age. Both were dealing extensively with the separation proeess. The staff were in the process of either initiating relationships or solidfying already existing ones and in some instanees beginning families, while their relationships to their own families of origin still exerted an influence. Each subsystem was simultaneously dealing with its own internal and relationship development, and the development of the other two subsystems in interaction with them.

The kinds of transitions and stresses which are experieneed by the family of the adolescent are also encountered in the alternative school of the adolescent. (This will be discussed further in Chapter V.) The developmental processes they go through are very similar. The expression of the stages differ among alternative schools based on such dimensions as the structure, composition and size of the school. More importantly they differ in terms of how they handle the transitions and stresses which are eommon to all. How change and anxiety are dealt with directly influences whether the transitions will be smooth and natural or whether they will encourage additional tensions which will then exacerbate one another.

Developmental phases create new demands for adjustment. A sehool whieh inflexibly commits itself to one particular way of functioning is not allowing the

process to evolve, but is rather adhering to old patterns which worked during one stage but do not necessarily work at all other stages. These fixed patterns inhibit the growth of the school and its subsystems. Instead, a school can be seen in a way similar to how a well-functioning family operates; a socio-cultural system which continually restructures in order to allow for the transformations which are always occurring as a result of new developmental demands. Such a system is able to develop new transactional patterns when they are needed without destroying subsystem boundaries. At the same time the security of the system is ensured and each person's psychosocial growth encouraged.

The development of the school is a reflection of the developmental phases that the students, families and staff are going through. The way each is acknowledged and deal with within the school is connected to how well the school functions. Ignoring or stifling of a phase is generally expressed through dysfunctional transactional patterns which tend to reinforce one another and temporarily postpone dealing with the issues. Each individual in the school brings with her the patterns of behavior of an emotional system which were learned in her own family of origin. It is the obligation of the alternative school to promote those transactional patterns which are conducive to each person's growth, create an emotional system in the school which reinforces that process, and develop a structure which is both flexible enough to accommodate to the changing developmental stages and firm enough to create a secure environment for the flexibility.

The alternative school can be characterized by yet another kind of developmental process. That process involves the way such a school evolves over time

from its inception to its termination. This is influenced by the subsystem processes, and also by basic structural and policy decisions. Many of the particulars of that process are idiosyncratic to each school. But there are also particulars about which generalizations can be made. One way to generalize about that process is to see it in terms of a family developmental process concerned with parenting. In an article entitled "Transition to Parenthood" (Rossi, 1968), the author structurally analyzes the parental role cycle and develops a conceptual system which views parenthood as a role transition and developmental stage in itself. Using Erikson's stage-task concepts as a framework, she defines the role cycle stages of parenthood as: anticipatory stage, honeymoon stage, plateau stage, and disengagement-termination stage. In terms of the parental role, the anticipatory stage is similar to pregnancy. The honeymoon stage is "that post-childbirth period during which, through intimacy and prolonged contact, an attachment between parent and child is laid down".[6] The plateau stage is "the protracted middle period of a role cycle during which the role is fully exercised."[7] The disengagement-termination stage comes right before the role ends, which in the parental role is not clearly indicated by any one pivotal event.

The above analysis can be directly applied to the developmental process of alternative schools. It is a fitting analogy, considering the fact that one of the main functions an alternative school can provide is similar to substitute parenting for the students, and a model of effective parenting for the students' families. It is in that sense also that the school itself moves through the parental role cycle

stages. In such an alternative school the anticipatory stage is similar to the planning stage, when everyone is preparing for the birth of the school. The honeymoon stage time period comes right after the school begins when students and staff are just beginning to really get to know each other and when the unlimited potential of the school is experienced as such. The plateau stage can be seen as the period of time when the school stabilizes and begins to mature. The termination-disengagement stage can be interpreted as the point at which the school either dissolves and dies, or when it expands or changes into something which is structurally, ideologically and characterlogically different from what it used to be. There are no exact time periods to fit each of these stages; each school goes through the stages according to its own tempo. At King Philip the anticipatory stage began in the spring of 1974 when the idea for the school first was generated. The honeymoon stage lasted from February 1975 when the school opened to September 1975, which was the beginning of the next year. The inception of the plateau stage was September 1975 and the school is currently still in that stage.

The developmental stages which characterize the overall process of the alternative school and its subsystems, described in this section, is further elaborated on in terms of how rituals help define that process, in the following section.

Application #5: The stages of the developmental process in the family and in the alternative school are articulated in terms of rituals which ease transitions and give meaning to the movement from phase to phase. The following is a description

of the purpose of such rituals and their enactment at King Philip. Although family therapists generally do not discuss rituals at all, or provide a very cursory description of their existenee,[8] they are presented in this study by the author as a useful means for eonneeting the days, weeks and months and a vehiele for sharing both celebrations and erises.

One function of the family is to provide a framework for members to jointly experience and share their joys and pains: the eelebration of pivotal events and transitions, and the shared mourning and support whieh are needed during erises. This includes such events as births and birthdays, deaths, graduations, marriages, holidays and moments less obvious which are exemplified by the mastery of a difficult skill (riding a bike for the first time, for example), securing a sought after job, developing a new friendship, a school accomplishment, or a growing pain. The sharing of such moments within the alternative sehool ean provide very valuable experiences which potentially solidify the family-like bonds among people involved, and permit them the experience of both learning how to share good times and to be helpful (and accept help) during hard times.

At King Philip the school year was punetuated by such rituals, epitomized by times when the students and staff joined together to eelebrate or to provide support. The celebrations included such things as surprise birthday parties, spontaneous trips, and holidays (national, local, King Philip related, and personal). The support came at times when someone was experieneing a serious illness or death of someone close, a crisis in the family of origin (such as divoree), or weathering a depression. Regular weekly rituals were also incorporated into the

week, such as a weekly lunch cooked and eaten together, a breakfast treat on meeting mornings, making popcorn to eat while watching a school movie, and a school event or trip every Friday. The rituals were a way of tying together everyone's individual experiences in order to ensure that although each student had a separate weekly schedule of classes there were times when everyone came together. And just like a family, the members of King Philip developed their own particular ways of marking traditional occasions, which made them into King Philip traditions. Moreover, celebrations were developed to mark occasions which were particular to King Philip (such as a King Philip anniversary, noting the day we first opened).

Christmas at King Philip was one particularly momentous event. During the first Christmas there was a large, full tree. One of the student's mother had taught a crafts class during the preceding six weeks, and one of the projects had been to make Christmas ornaments including some for the tree. Those ornaments and others contributed by students and staff were used to decorate the tree, which was a separate event in itself with everyone participating. Extra branches and decorations were also hung in that same room. On the day before Christmas vacation when the students came to school they noticed an enormous box under the tree, labeled "For King Philip." In the afternoon they were all gathered around the tree eating Christmas treats when suddenly one of the teachers walked in through the window dressed as Santa Claus (outfitted in a large ornate, old purple cape, floppy hat, and pasted on cotton for a beard which kept slipping) and carrying a big sack on his back. A natural ham, this teacher fully acted

the part and the students were enthusiastic. The first present opened was the big box under the tree, which was a ditto-machine which everybody had been wanting for quite a while. And then Santa opened his sack and as he pulled out a present he called a student's name. Although they were only small presents (each one different), each student walked up very seriously; some suddenly became shy, some were embarrassed, and one boy actually sat on his lap. The normally tough and sullen teen-agers became unexpectedly diffident and humble. Exclamations of expectation were punctuated by long silences. Christmas served as a strong reminder that the appreciation and celebration of rituals when made into meaningful traditions can be invaluable experiences for everyone in the school.

The following section explains how the developmental process (as articulated in terms of rituals) described above also exhibits justice and loyalty dimensions within the intergenerational framework.

Application #6: The multigenerational ledger of justice and loyalties provides a framework within which the family system operates. As such, they are also major contextual components in the emotional system within the school. This section provides a description of the multigenerational context as manifested by the following (and the interrelationship with one another): the multigenerational past which each individual member brings to the school; the group loyalty and ledger of justice within the school itself; the potential conflict between the former and the latter and ways to prevent it; the way in which the school can act as a model for the staff, students and students' families; the role of justice in adolescence and societal ramifications.

Each individual carries with her a multigenerational past and present composed of loyalty obligations, a bookkeeping system which keeps track of merits and indebtedness, and the ledger of justice which accounts for the distribution of merit (to be balanced against exploitation) within primary relationship systems. In this sense, the members of an alternative school community interact with one another and hold expectations of one another which are based, in part, on what they have learned about relationships from that multigenerational framework. It is extended family systems who are relating to one another, not just single individuals. That is not to deny that each individual is responsible for her own actions; it is a reminder of the context within which each person is operating.

The developmental process of the alternative school can be viewed in terms of the ledger of justice in a way similar to how the family system process is described. This is the case not solely in terms of the multigenerational past which each individual brings with her to a new situation, but also in terms of the justice and loyalty dynamics present in the school itself. Although members of a school are not ontically dependent on one another in the same way that immediate family members are, there exists a dependency which originates from the establishment of group loyalty. The members of the school have a very high investment in one another and in the continued existence of the school, and after spending every day together in close quarters they develop dynamics which are similar to the emotional system within the family. The continued reinforcement of their investment through the family system dynamics of the group creates an intense loyalty

to the school which is similar (although not as profound) as the loyalty bonds within the family.

At King Philip, each potential entering student after an initial interview was told to go home and think about whether or not she was absolutely sure she wanted to enroll. It was also explained that the student would have to make a commitment to follow the King Philip rules. By the time a student actually started she understood as well as possible to what she was committing herself. Group loyalty and commitment became particularly apparent when any one student was disruptive to the school process. At that point the group handled it themselves during a Friday meeting or at an impromptu special meeting. There were a number of times when the group explained to the student in question that her behavior was endangering the life of the school and that she had made a commitment to the group which was not being upheld. It was discussed until a satisfactory agreement had been reached. This did not occur only with students. For instance, there was a staff member who sporadically arrived late for his class in the morning. The students told him that everyone had made a commitment to arrive promptly and that although they were all there he was not honoring his part of the commitment.

The students' loyalty to the school is epitomized by the following incident. A student arrived one morning during a snowstorm. She had walked one mile carrying her guitar and algebra book in order to get a ride to school. Although all the other schools in the area had cancelled classes, the director had not realized that and had not phoned the radio station to include King Philip in the

list of cancellations. After she arrived, slowly some other students who had obtained rides (the school buses were not running) also came in. Rather than use the snowstorm as an excuse they had struggled to get to school.

This loyalty to the school community potentially has both positive and negative aspects. Alternative schools which only deal with the child and pay no attention to the family may create a conflict of loyalty for the child. They also may tend to exacerbate an already existing conflict of loyalty which stems from the conflict between loyalty to the family and loyalty to the peer group of the adolescent. If the alternative school does not include the parents in a meaningful way conflicts of loyalty often occur. The families may become suspicious of what goes on at the school because they have no participatory knowledge and because they feel rejected from having not been included. This can result in the parents subtly sabotaging the work the school is trying to do with the child because the parents tend to feel that their child's loyalty to the school threatens their child's loyalty to their family. In seeing the family as a system, it seems that especially for adolescents still living at home, change in the child does not occur without change in the family system, or at least an understanding of and a feeling of participation in the child's change by the parent. Reciprocally, the presence of families in the school encourages growth and change in the school which would otherwise be impeded.

Occasionally there were students who were accepted at King Philip even though their parents were not willing to participate and felt that their child would most likely fail. The parents were continually encouraged to participate; home

visits were sometimes initiated by the director and family therapist. If interest or positive feelings were not obtained, regardless of how well the student might be doing, she usually dropped out eventually. It was clear in some cases that the parents had felt threatened by their child's new loyalties and interests and/or were suspicious of "alternative schools." Without obtaining those parents' respect or allegiance, there was generally little hope for their child's continued attendance.

If families are included in the school process, it can be used to help the families adjust to the rebalancing of loyalties which has been occurring by virtue of the fact that their children have reached adolescence and are starting to separate more clearly from the family and develop ties outside of the family. The school can act as a model for the families around these issues. When the parents see that their children are doing well and are committed to the school, and they are helped not to feel threatened by that progress outside the family, they can develop their own loyalty ties to the school. This potentially fosters further change within the family through the encouragement of their children's changes and the incorporation of those changes in the family itself. As the students learn within the school more about how to act justly towards one another, and are helped in both repaying loyalty obligations and in seeing how dependence on one another can be constructive instead of just frightening, further developing a sense of trust, merit and commitment, these gains can be transferred to the family.

For example, at King Philip there was a family whose fifteen year-old son was over-protected and dominated by his parents. His father was abrupt with him and they did not spend much time together. His mother treated him as if he were

much younger than he actually was. He was extremely shy, withdrawn and uncommunicative when he started at King Philip. At first he sat outside the group or hid during Friday group meetings and during multiple family group meetings when he came he would not even enter the room. People meeting him assumed he was much younger than he really was, even though average size for his age. As he began to slowly emerge from his shell at King Philip, his parents took an increasingly active role in the school and developed a strong commitment to it. They were able to observe and discuss the way the staff treated their son which was fostering growth and maturity. They slowly started to model their own behavior after what they saw was helping their son in school. As the student developed positive interrelationships and trust and commitment, his family responded similarly. Two years later he and his father had taken flying lessons and were licensed pilots, his mother had persued her own interests and related to her son more appropriately, and the student had become an articulate, respected member of the school.

Adolescents have a newly developing and very strong sense of justice.[9] Many of the stories which students at King Philip told, and about which they were most outraged, had to do with a felt imbalance in justice. Often, their stories about their experiences in the public school system were essentially accounts about having been wronged. For instance, students often bitterly described how they were blamed and punished for things which they hadn't really done but for which they had been assumed responsible because of their reputations. They also described incidents where a group of students were involved in doing something

they weren't supposed to do, but only the students who were considered "trouble-makers" were actually punished. The major underlying injustice involved how it was that they came to be labelled troublemakers in the first place. Often that indictment had been made while the student was in elementary school and had been passed on through word of mouth and through official school records to every new school the student attended. The student was then locked into a role that she was unable to alter. It naturally became a self-fulfilling prophecy; the teachers expectations were instrumental in ensuring that the student lived up to her reputation.

By the time such students had reached King Philip many had already internalized their reputations. They actually believed that they were inherently "bad." They didn't always admit it in so many words, but they acted it out because they felt it was expected of them and part of their character. They had never really been given a chance to act otherwise. The students at King Philip were by and large from low-income homes, which further contributed to their feelings of low self-esteem. In a capitalist society people are generally judged in terms of how much material wealth they are able to accumulate and that societal judgment becomes internalized. The students' families had very negative feelings about themselves and low expectations for themselves and their children. They believed that because they had very low incomes that there was something intrinsically wrong with them. That attitude was not only passed on to their children, but was also often the attitude of the teachers who came in contact with their children. Many teachers' preconceived notions were that the children "from the wrong side

of the tracks" were going to be both behavior and learning problems. Therefore, these students never really had a chance to be otherwise. A primary objective at King Philip was teaching the students and their families how that educational/societal process had worked against them. In other words, they needed to learn that they were not "bad" because they were poor, and they hadn't failed in the public school because there was necessarily anything inherently wrong with them, but in some cases had been set up as the scapegoat in a system which needs scapegoats in order to perpetuate itself.

In this chapter the conceptual framework (developed in the previous chapter) was applied to an analysis of alternative education; the structural properties defining the school as family system were abstracted and delineated. Those structural properties were defined as applications, of which there were six:

1. The fundamental system characteristics.
2. The operation of the system and its subsystems.
3. The transactional sets and triangling process.
4. The developmental processes of the system and subsystems.
5. The rationale behind rituals and examples of them.
6. The multigenerational framework and justice and loyalty implications.

Those system and subsystem characteristics as articulated in relationship systems and as viewed through the developmental evolvement of the school (which were discussed in this chapter), serve as the given assumptions and the framework for

the following chapter. Chapter III examined the structural properties of the school as family system; Chapter IV uses those findings in analyzing the school's therapeutic process, ramifications regarding normative standards of health and pathology, and the adolescent separation process.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Murray Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in Administration Systems."

[2]Ibid., p. 185.

[3]Sally Minard, "Family Systems Model in Organizational Consultation."

[4]Ibid.

[5]Bowen, "Toward the Differentiation of Self in Administration Systems," p. 184.

[6]Alice Rossi, "Transition to Parenthood," p. 28.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Boszormenyi-Nagy, p. 75.

[9]John Mays, "The Adolescent as a Social Being," Chapter VI.

CHAPTER IV

THE SCHOOL'S THERAPEUTIC PROCESS CONCEPTS OF HEALTH AND PATHOLOGY: THE ADOLESCENT SEPARATION PROCESS

In this chapter the structural properties of the school as family system described in the preceding chapter are applied as a basis for discussing the school's therapeutic process, concepts of health and pathology, and the adolescent separation process. More specifically, Chapter IV develops six applications of the conceptual framework to alternative education. They are:

Application #7: Characteristics of the therapeutic process including stages, diagnosis, contracts, and setting and accomplishing therapeutic goals.

Application #8: The role and technique of the family therapist in the alternative school.

Application #9: The role and technique of the family therapist at King Philip.

Application #10: Concepts of health, pathology and normality as manifested by labels and roles.

Application #11: Correlations between "healthy" family system dynamics and a "healthy" alternative school milieu.

Application #12: The adolescent family separation process in the alternative school and the multiple family group.

The family therapeutic process of the school operates on a number of different levels. Therapeutic evaluation and intervention is directed towards the family system of the school and also towards its subsystems. Although the dynamics of the subsystems are directly connected to one another and to the entire system within the school itself, there are some dynamics which apply most specifically to the overall school process, and others which are more appropriate to how the subsystems function. In the following, the family system within the school is differentiated from the subsystems in instances where those differences seem most clear.

The Therapeutic Process

Application #7: The general characteristics of the therapeutic process as demonstrated in therapeutic work with families is also applicable to a description of the therapeutic process in the alternative school. This section provides a brief description of: the stages of family therapy in the school, diagnosis and contractual obligations; and setting therapeutic goals and effecting change.

The four non-sequential phases of family therapy posited by Minuchin (described in Chapter II), are applicable to the family therapy process as applied to the alternative school. The family therapist (as crisis consultant or as a regular long-term staff member consultant) in the school diagnoses, determines objectives, assesses options and periodically evaluates the results in much the same way that it is done within a biological family system. Diagnosis

involves assessing the family dynamics present in the school in order to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in the system, the transactional patterns, and the structure and operation of the subsystems. During the process of family therapy in the school, goals for change and overall objectives emerge. Therapeutic strategies and options are evaluated, taking into consideration what the members of the school say their needs are, the therapist's judgment of the situation, and the kind of match that can be made between the school's style and personality and that of the therapist. Periodically during the therapeutic process, the objectives, strategies and results are re-evaluated.

One reason a consultant is hired by a school is in response to what is seen as a particular "behavior problem" in an individual student. This is similar to the case of the "identified patient" in the nuclear family. Ordinarily, a consultant would specifically address herself to the identified patient or problem. A family therapist consultant would view such a patient or problem as a system issue. A primary objective for the family therapist consultant is to diagnose and treat the entire system instead of just the presenting problem. The therapist joins the school and assesses the school's family structure and transactional patterns, its flexibility and sensitivity to individuals, its developmental stage and history, and the role the identified patient plays in terms of expressing a dysfunction in the system. A first step towards making that systems diagnosis is to get a commitment from all the school members to be involved in the therapeutic process, not just the identified patient. A therapeutic contract with the school includes both logistical dimensions and basic assumptions

regarding the problem and goals for change. At this point the total membership begins to discuss what they each would like to individually and collectively accomplish.

The kinds of goals set by the group to a large degree determines the length and depth of the therapeutic intervention. In crisis-intervention the therapist tends to spend a short but concentrated amount of time dealing with the crisis and its ramifications in terms of how it is affecting the system. If the membership is committed to therapy which will go beyond the immediate crisis and have a potential for evaluating the interpersonal dynamics in greater depth, then the family therapy can proceed in a more long-term framework. In that case, the crisis is viewed as a pivotal event providing valuable information about how the system operates. That information can be used in the long-term intervention which can begin once the immediate crisis is resolved.

Change in the overall family dynamics and structure of the school or in any one subsystem has an affect on all the individuals and subsystems in the school. Similarly, each individual change which is system oriented (as differentiated from being oriented towards an individual's internal psychic process) has a direct affect on the rest of the membership. Regardless of whether the focus is on the individual within system terms, or on the system patterns in themselves, any individual who changes is often met with criticism and rejection. Change may be felt as disloyalty and a threat to the maintenance of the group. If the individual maintains the change in spite of criticism, the group often comes to see the benefits of the change for everyone.

Therapeutic goals focus on creating a system which fosters growth and maturation, and encourages members to reach higher levels of differentiation of self and critical awareness. Some indications of progress towards such goals include: a decrease in the overall enmeshment (or disengagement) of the system as exhibited by less diffuse anxiety and greater individuation; more openness and fewer secret alliances; clear, functional communication patterns; and a greater tolerance of individual difference and separateness.

The phases of therapy including diagnostic and contractual implications, and the determination of goals and progress, as described here, are applied to a discussion of the specific role and technique of the family therapist in the alternative school in the following section.

Application #8: The role and technique of the family therapist in the alternative school is comparable to that of the family therapist working with family clientele. This section describes how the family therapist performs in the alternative school and while discussing different techniques the following is explained: the differences between crisis-intervention and long-term therapy in the school; family therapy with the whole group and family therapy with one individual; the cumulative impact of individual multigenerational ledgers of justice.

The family therapy consultation style presented here is a conglomeration of Minuchin's, Bowen's, and Boszormenyi-Nagy's styles. Although very different from one another, they can also be seen as complementary. One of the factors which determines which technique is emphasized in any given situation is the

intended duration and depth of the therapy. For instance, that is based on whether it is crisis oriented or within more of a long-term framework. In the context of long-term family therapy consultation, different techniques may be used at different stages. A major qualifying factor is what style and technique fits the therapist's character and temperament. The model presented here by the author is one which she has used successfully and comfortably. It is intended to be a model framework providing a set of parameters from which the individual therapist can find a suitable way of working.

In the case of crisis-intervention family therapy consultation, the initial focus is on discerning the structural properties and system dynamics of the school in order to isolate the dysfunctional transactional patterns. While working with the entire system or appropriate subsystem(s), the family therapist develops strategies for transforming and restructuring the system. Those interventions are aimed at creating movement towards the agreed upon goals. In order to accomplish this, the therapist joins the system in a position of leadership by continually attempting to relate to the family on its own terms. She accommodates to it (using maintenance, tracking and mimesis) by adapting in order to achieve joining. The actual restructuring operations and the way the subsystems are joined and accommodated to depend on their structure and the patterns that have been unearthed.

After the structural properties and the system dynamics of the school are explored, an alternative technique the family therapist might decide to use is to work principally with one or more subsystems, or individuals, instead of

the whole system. For instance, an approach similar to Bowen's method of working with families might be applied in deciding that the most immediately effective way to intervene is with one key person, such as the director. Such a decision would be based on seeing that one way of helping the system to become less enmeshed is to work with the director on differentiating from the rest of the membership. During that process the individual attempts to remove herself from the emotional system and change the part that she is playing in reinforcing the negative dynamics. That modification of a key person's role who has been contributing to sustaining a destructive emotional system, will influence everyone else in the emotional system. When that person removes herself and observes without participating, the rest of the people involved also have to change because they are confronted with a radically different set of circumstances. The modification of one main triangle in the school will change the others which are in emotional contact with it.

Whichever approach (or combination of approaches) seems most applicable to the particular alternative school situation being investigated, a useful context to keep in mind when exploring the system dynamics in the school is that of the multigenerational ledger of justice. This is applicable on a number of different levels. For one, it means taking into consideration the fact that every person in the school has a different history and set of circumstances which they bring with them, stemming from the dynamics in their families of origin. In a crisis-intervention situation where the family therapist consultant assumes that she will primarily be addressing herself to the immediate crisis on a short-term

basis, consideration of each individual's multigenerational background will only be minimal. In that case it would be used to further explain and understand the presenting dynamics as manifestations of larger processes. On the other hand, if the therapist's role is a long-term, more committed and involved one, and she is able to intervene in the system on many different levels, that multigenerational framework can be explored more extensively. For instance, the family therapist might then focus on one primary subsystem and explore how the loyalty obligations, bookkeeping systems of merit and indebtedness, and felt exploitations operate within the subsystem at the school and how it is related to the way those same dynamics operate in each person's family of origin.

On yet another level, the family therapist consultant, while operating on either a short-term or long-term basis, can use what she knows about how felt injustices are expressed, especially among adolescents. That is, she isolates ethical issues as they are demonstrated within the particular dynamics of the system and interprets their underlying justice implications. Retributory justice is often a major factor among adolescents. It is retributory in the sense of feeling one (or one's family, by implication) has been wronged and therefore continually seeking revenge. Unless this is understood as such, those dynamics tend to reinforce themselves within the school. The original conflict is often forgotten while a new one remains. Each person feels continually wronged and therefore is always in the process of getting back at the other person. A ledger of justice is built up around these circumstances. The family therapist intervenes in such a system, separating the confused dynamics and helping the

participants to actively rebalance their ledgers.

While this section described the role and technique of the family therapist in the alternative school, the following chapter specifically discusses how the family therapist operated at King Philip.

Application #9: The role and technique of the family therapist at King Philip is presented here as a case example of how a family therapist performed in one particular alternative school. In this section the following is described: the general duties of the family therapist including group process facilitation and teaching; the relationship between the family therapist and the students, staff and families; the four functions of the multiple-family group.

The family therapist at King Philip was a part-time staff member. His general duties included (with flexibility): attending weekly staff meetings and weekly all-school group meetings, leading the multiple family group one evening every other week, teaching a psychology class, providing crisis intervention and family therapy to any individual or subsystem that needed it, and continual consultation to the director. His role was kept separate from everyone else's at the school in order for him to operate as impartially as possible so as to maximize the effectiveness of his interventions. The role of family therapist is unfortunately rare in alternative schools; at King Philip it was indispensable.

During the Thursday afternoon staff meetings and the Friday morning student/staff group meetings, the family therapist essentially was a group process facilitator. While most of the people involved were mainly focusing on the content of the issues being discussed, he was able to focus on the under-

lying process and help those involved to recognize the dynamics of that process. For instance, when the group would become enmeshed in an insignificant argument, he intervened and restructured the situation by reformulating the issue or asking a relevant question which would redirect the discussion. During these meetings he was also helpful in guiding the discussions away from solely talking about "business matters" and towards looking at the group's interpersonal dynamics. This was particularly important at staff meetings, because the staff often became so involved in continually dealing with the pressing financial, organizational, and educational matters, that they tended to disregard their articulated need to spend time specifically developing their working relationship to one another.

The psychology class he taught focused both on process and content. While teaching the students specific technical information, he was also teaching them how to process their own experiences and providing a place for them to do that (separate from the staff). It was also a way for him to get to know the students in another role and on a different level. For instance, one psychology class was called "The Psychology of Communication." During one class meeting he was introducing the students to such concepts as the double-bind, pseudo-mutuality, and skewing, which he introduced by reading from R. D. Laing's Knots. The students were extremely interested and working hard at understanding those concepts. At that time in the school a small clique had been forming and many other students were feeling excluded and rejected. Some of those in the inner clique were in that class (the majority of the students in the school enrolled

in the psychology classes), and the discussion led to using those concepts to describe and understand what had been happening lately in the school in the "in" group and the "out" group. People were encouraged to give constructive feedback to one another, and talk about how they were feeling; a renewed sense of understanding and closeness was kindled.

As students, staff and families got to know the family therapist they began to feel very comfortable with him, and would seek him out when they were having trouble. He would see some families and students on a regular basis for a period of time, while there were others he worked with when a need arose. The same applied to the staff. The family therapist and the director worked closely, processing all the various school dynamics. One reason for that was their marital relationship. But even if that had not been the case, it is important for the director to have someone who is peripherally involved with the school to talk to about what is happening in the school. At King Philip the director was the person who was depended on, and referred to, continually and who dispensed support without really receiving much. Therefore, it was important for her to have someone who was available to provide the support needed and help in remaining as objective as possible. The family therapist's role was most clearly delineated. Not immersed in the daily process, he was able to move through it with a relatively clear perspective. The director's and family therapist's relationship encouraged a constructive, intimate working relationship, while at the same time necessitated a constant monitoring of that relationship and its implications in the school.

The multiple family group was co-led by the family therapist and the director. The function of the group was varied and complex. On one level it was a support group for the families: it was a time when they could talk to each other about issues confronting them and thereby receive and give help to one another. One primary result was the recognition that they were all dealing with similar problems. Because they were all families with adolescents there were certain common denominators. For instance, one issue which kept occurring in various forms was that of adolescents and parents separating. Thus, another function of the group became to help the parents and children alleviate some of the separation tensions, and to be able to see how those dynamics are expressed (that will be discussed in further detail in a later section). A third function of the group was to provide a safe arena for parents and children to start to really talk to each other and deal with each other directly within a supportive milieu. And fourthly, the group was used as a way of keeping the parents involved in and informed of what was happening in the school.

The preceding three applications described the therapeutic process in terms of: the general characteristics of family therapy as applied to alternative education including phases, diagnosis, contracts, goals and progress; the role and technique of the family therapist in alternative schools; and the role and technique of the family therapist in one actual alternative school, King Philip. The following section uses the premises established above in order to discuss concepts regarding health and pathology in the alternative school, specifically those that address the question of what constitutes "normality" and a "healthy"

family school environment. Again, examples from King Philip are used when applicable.

Concepts of Health and Pathology

Application #10: "Normality" is a relative concept directly influenced by societal standards and contextual factors. Family therapists explain that a family member who deviates is often unjustly assigned a pejorative label which adheres. Such is also often the case with those who do not succeed in public school. This section describes: the relationship between concepts of normality and attitudes toward alternative education; the ramifications of assigned negative labels; and case histories of individual students whose mistaken reputations continually and destructively influenced their self-concepts.

Societal norms are often considered to be synonymous with what is proper and healthy. What the majority thinks, feels, and does is traditionally observed to be the normal and best way of thinking, feeling and doing. Divergences from the norm are, in this sense, suspect. It is often assumed that someone who participates in an alternative organization, for instance, does so because there is something wrong with her and she is not able to conform to the societal ideal. It is often threatening to seriously consider doing something which is in conflict with what is judged to be acceptable and normal, because then the attached values and assumptions must also be questioned and reconsidered. Such is particularly the case in the field of education.

Prevailing attitudes toward alternative education are indicative of the debate between the kinds of attitudes described above and less traditional ones. For the purpose of clarifying the various types of issues which arise regarding attitudes towards alternative education and normality, four such perspectives are offered as examples: 1) opposition to alternative education because it is believed that everyone should adjust to the public education system as it now exists; 2) a more favorable attitude towards alternative schools, which sees them as necessary for those children with "behavior and learning problems" who tend to disrupt the public schools and need "individual attention"; 3) a favorable attitude which considers the students who attend them to be no less motivated, creative, and capable than other students, and often more so. (They are "problems" in that they won't accept the kind of schooling which was presented to them in the public schools); 4) this group regards the educational process in much the same way as the third group but feels some ambivalence towards alternative schools because they think that the changes should be made right in the public school system instead of placing all the "rebellious" students in an alternative. This is a fairly superficial rendering of four different viewpoints, included here in order to present a general range of opinions, and to point out important ways in which they are similar and different. For instance, those in the first two categories are similar to one another in the same way as are those in the last two categories. In fact, people committed to alternative education continually debate the points raised by the third and fourth groups and are able to see the validity of both arguments.

The distinction between the first two sets of opinions and the last two are what is important. It is the difference between those who see alternative education as tailored to those students who are not competent enough to succeed in the public school system, and those who see the students' rebellion and disaffection from the public school system as often valid and legitimate. Again, it is the difference between regarding only behavior which fits the norm as being healthy and normal, as opposed to believing that there is some value in opposition to a norm which in itself is not seen to be growth or health promoting.

The students who attended King Philip were regarded by many (especially the teachers and administrators in the public school) to be "problem" children. In their records they were variously described as: being unable to adjust, not having the capacity to meet the demands of school, having serious acting-out patterns related to emotional disturbance, learning disabled, withdrawn, unable to relate to peers, out of touch with reality. These were often labels which once applied were indelibly passed on to each new set of teachers approaching the student for the first time. It becomes easier in a class of thirty students to rely on previous formal records than to disregard them and observe the student oneself.

The relationship between those formal records and attitudes, and the actual lives of some children will help clarify the issue. The following brief case histories are presented as such examples of the effect which adherence to a rigid imposed norm of behavior has on so many. Fictional names have been used to protect the students' and families' identities.

When Joseph started elementary school he was placed in a class for retarded children. Each year that he was promoted to the next grade level he was assumed to belong in the class which was set aside for those considered retarded. When he reached junior high school, the pattern was repeated until one day a special education teacher decided to do some new tests and take a closer look at Joseph's abilities. Everyone was shocked to find out that his performance I.Q. was 140++. His reading and math scores were still very low. But at that point he was already 15 and had completed all those years of formal schooling where he had been assumed to be retarded. Therefore, no one was really able to say what his potential might be, considering he had never really been given a chance to find out.

When Joseph started school at King Philip he was 16 and was in the 8th grade. He had been expelled from school for nearly breaking another student's arm. He was about six feet tall and strong. Joseph said he had had that fight and many others because he was continually and relentlessly teased by the other students. He claimed he had a bad temper that he was afraid of, and was told that if he ever was violent or physically hurt another student at King Philip he would be immediately expelled from the school. During the two years he spent at King Philip he occasionally asked to be reminded of that; he learned how to more appropriately express his frustration and anger. Other students were particularly helpful in getting him to change his behavior and self-concept. But not once in that entire time did he act violently or abusively.

When Joseph entered King Philip his reading and math levels were somewhere around the first few grades of elementary school. He tended to perseverate and act very immature for his age. That behavior was interspersed with occasional periods of sophisticated, mature and sensitive behavior. It is hard to know how much of the inappropriate behavior was a result of what he learned from the other students in his elementary school classes and of what he internalized from those experiences about his own identity and abilities. During his two years at King Philip he matured and learned some basic academic skills. Still, two years was certainly not enough time to make his overall behavior age-appropriate, nor his academic performance. He loved animals, especially horses, and at King Philip he had blacksmith apprenticeships as part of his program. Eventually he was admitted to a blacksmith school which he attended for the three required months and graduated with a ferrier's certificate.

King Philip was the first safe, secure, and comfortable environment which Joseph had experienced. His family life had been tumultuous, violent and rejecting. King Philip was in some ways a substitute family for him. He wasn't treated as if he were crazy or retarded--the students and staff placed appropriate expectations on him and didn't treat him with the kinds of special considerations which would have reinforced his negative feelings about himself and his abilities. The students were particularly helpful to him in peer support groups where they gave him support and kindness but also didn't let him get away with things for which he should have been responsible. In that environment during Friday morning meetings he learned how to give and accept direct constructive feedback and

began to feel that there were people who cared about him. He was able to talk about his family history and articulate his feelings and needs. He also was helpful to other people and occasionally very insightful regarding interpersonal interactions. One such time occurred during a multiple-family group meeting (he attended even though his parent did not). It was also attended by a student who was living in a half-way house and his parents who had not seen him in months. It was a difficult group meeting. People were not talking readily and there seemed to be very little direction. Joseph said to the student's parents, "When you walked in Bob was so happy to see you. It's very hard to be separated from your family." The way he said it and his follow-up helped give substance and purpose to the discussion. This was one example indicative of his potential abilities. The cursory description presented here is meant only as a sketchy overview illustrating how one's identity may be irrevocably influenced by others perceptions, most especially the school's, and the kinds of environment which can be conducive to the healing of past wounds.

Joseph's case is particularly dramatic. His past negative experiences and learning blocks were most severe. The students of King Philip were a very mixed group. Some had learning blocks while others had no trouble with academics; some had very difficult family backgrounds and others did not; some were becoming interested in going to college while others were using their apprenticeships to prepare for an immediate vocation; some were withdrawn and some were very outgoing. One thing they had in common was that most of their school records were inaccurate or at least failed to recognize the part the school

had played in creating or exacerbating the identified problem. Most had refused, whether through withdrawal, acting-out, or simple non-attendance, to adapt.

For instance, Beth's records portrayed a very withdrawn, uncommunicative, sullen adolescent. Those records indicated that she was that way character-logically, without taking into consideration the context. At King Philip she quickly became a school leader, and was respected for her sense of responsibility and enthusiasm. During the year that she was at King Philip she worked hard on improving her weak academic skills and participated regularly with her mother in the multiple-family group. She had been absent more than present in high school; at King Philip she was almost never absent.

An outstanding incident involving Beth occurred when everyone at King Philip went to visit Smith College's Botany Department and greenhouse. Beth and the director were sitting on the steps outside waiting for everyone and watching the Smith students walk by. Beth's father, who had been a lawyer, died when she was very young. Ever since, she and her mother lived in housing projects on social security benefits. As she sat there watching, Beth said she wondered what she would be like today if her father had not died, and then asked many questions about the type of person who goes to Smith and what they do there. The next day she brought in a small, yellowed photograph of a bright-eyed, exuberant little girl holding her father's hand. A few weeks later at a multiple-family group she and her mother talked together about her father. A month after that her mother said that at a large family gathering, Beth had whispered to her that she was going to start an apprenticeship in a law office. Her mother said she herself had cried.

Ricky was another example of a student whose problems were reinforced by his school experiences. He was one of the youngest students, small for his age, and very energetic. He was always misbehaving and getting into trouble. He also had difficulty reading well. At home he was acting out the tension between his parents, who reacted by being overly protective and concerned about him (instead of working on their own relationship). The schools reinforced this by treating him as if there was something very wrong with him. He began to believe it himself and responded by acting more disruptively. His parents reacted by becoming more worried and confused, which made them increasingly estranged from each other because they disagreed and did not feel competent as parents. The schools had become unwitting accomplices in this process. Ricky's reading wasn't improving, and behaviorally he was increasingly becoming a problem. At King Philip he had the kind of structure which he needed and his parents received family therapy. King Philip discovered and took into consideration the above dynamics in order to create the kind of environment for Ricky which would help him to change the role he had been locked into by school and family. Because of the staff's awareness of his family and personal history, when he started acting out the same scapegoat role at King Philip which he had been accustomed to at home and at school, they were able to prevent that from continuing.

In the public school everyone gets placed in a role.[1] There can't be overachievers without underachievers, or "good" kinds without "bad" kids. Very often the roles which the students are assigned either reinforce the roles they are also carrying at home, or lock them into other rigid behavior patterns

which are self-destructive. There were a number of King Philip students who were extremely bright and talented but had found the public schools alienating and unresponsive and thus, had not participated and been tracked into believing they weren't smart. Such students had often been called "withdrawn and of low to average ability." One student saw that her 766 report had said she was "unable to relate to peers;" in fact, she had a close circle of friends and what they were referring to was her exclusion from the cheerleading, football rally, extracurricular activities crowds. And still another was regarded as "out of touch with reality," when the schools had determined that reality was synonymous with adjusting to school, and a particular socio-economic status.

The point is that just as a family therapist would not label a person characterlogically "helpless" but instead would see the person as "being helpless" in a particular context and time frame, the same holds true for school labels. Rather than use a diagnostic label which implies that the behavior exists in and of itself, a person should be described within the context of her environment (such as society, school and family). The way a person behaves is a transient stage, not a chronic state of being, and influenced by many contextual factors. A person who is "having problems learning" is not necessarily a "learning problem." The relative health or pathology in an individual is jointly influenced by the person's psychological make-up, the family relationship system, outside institutions such as schools, and the societal norms and economic structure. In all three cases, discussed above, and in most of the others at King Philip, the students were a product of low socio-economic standing which had been a major

factor leading to the lack of respect granted them by teachers and family, and eventually themselves. This attitude was reinforced continually by the community, creating a vicious cycle in which all those dynamics conspired to keep them in their place.[2]

The vicious cycle derived from arbitrary and inflexible negative role designations described above is taken up in the next section in terms of describing the kind of environment which encourages positive role assumptions and healthy growth and development.

Application #11: The encouragement of "healthy" family system dynamics in an alternative school reinforces positive role assumptions and promotes a healthy school environment. This section discusses: the relationship between identity and roles; structural characteristics of the alternative school conducive to the acquisition of constructive roles; the relationship between a "healthy" family and a "healthy" alternative school; and examples of the above drawn from King Philip.

Above it was seen how outside standards of normality and societal judgments influence the kinds of roles students assume and labels students are assigned in school. The way in which those roles and labels adhere to both how others see the student and how the student sees herself was discussed. When family therapists discuss roles, they describe how children in disturbed families often assume such roles as scapegoat, parentified child, caretaker, delinquent, etc. in order to sometimes draw attention to a family dysfunction and/or sometimes to try to keep the family intact. In Chapter II, childhood

depression and psychosomatic illness were linked to such disturbances in the family system. A question which remains is whether roles are necessarily negative or whether there is a potentially positive side to them, and if so how that can be reinforced.

Students entering King Philip ranged in age from thirteen to seventeen. They each had a long history of family, school and societal roles which they brought with them. It was not possible nor necessarily desirable to merely try and erase those destructive but comfortable roles. Identity and roles are dialectically intertwined; to simply erase a well-known role is similar to erasing someone's identity. Rather, the objective was to first define the role (and its family and school history) and then to explore its various negative and positive ramifications in order to lessen the former while strengthening the latter. The idea was to not fall into the pattern of unknowingly reinforcing self-destructing role behavior.

At King Philip there was a continual tension between trying to break out of unwanted role definitions and the safety involved in slipping back into those secure roles. It seemingly feels safer at first to stay in a role which is known and comfortable (regardless of its negative manifestations) than to try to use it differently or change it; the results are not only unknown but there is always the question of whether the person will be able to change. Therefore, at King Philip there was an attempt to examine each student's family and school history in order to be cognizant of potential dynamics influencing possible role assumptions. That knowledge was applied by the staff to their own behavior toward the

students. That is, they tried to remain as conscious as possible of those dynamics in order not to unintentionally reinforce destructive roles. In addition, the staff attempted to be as aware as possible of their own school and family history, so that they would not unwittingly foster destructive roles with the students based on their own unresolved issues.

King Philip tried to create a healthy family milieu in which individuals could try out new roles to which they were unaccustomed, play out old roles in a less destructive way and without having to become fixed in them, and develop an awareness of the potentially constructive dimensions of their usual role. In some cases they were helped to understand how their roles were connected to loyalty obligations in their families of origin, to the dynamics of their schools, and to societal factors. The staff did not pretend not to have assumptions and biases regarding role types. For instance, they also had a commitment to be aware of not perpetuating sexist or racist identity definitions, and worked hard at retaining a vigilance among themselves about that. It was a very difficult, continually evolving, self-conscious process.

As a family system, King Philip also had to be aware of not developing its own rigid role definitions out of its idiosyncratic family-like structure. Because the group loyalty ties became very intense (as is the case within a biological family), it was easy to use family roles which were not necessarily constructive. As was discussed in terms of the family, a group of such highly invested people can survive and strengthen their ties based on the assumption of negative, self-destructive roles. The creation of a healthy family milieu

within an alternative school implies that the roles assumed within the parental, sibling, and extended family subsystems should be conducive to everyone's further growth, not just to the continuance of the group.

It is being posited here that the development of "healthy" family system dynamics in an alternative school is directly correlated to the emergence of a "healthy" alternative school. Dynamics which impede the creation of such a school include: inflexible adherence to system patterns, frozen role obligations, rigid or diffuse boundaries and limits and an unyielding unbalanced ledger of justice. This indicates a lack of differentiation, enmeshment, and unresolved emotional attachments, as exhibited in dysfunctional transactional patterns.

This is not to say that "health" is synonymous with perfection in all of these areas. Transitory imbalance is not pathological. No system is inherently normal or abnormal. Developmentally, especially at transitional points, the school undergoes stress resulting from the changes taking place. At these times there is usually imbalance and some confusion. This occurs periodically in places like King Philip where there are often new people arriving and old people leaving approximately every six weeks. That implies a need for some degree of restructuring, which often includes stress and conflict. The way that stresses and anxiety are dealt with is a clear indication of how the school operates. It is at these points that weaknesses in the system become apparent and adjustment mechanisms and alternative transactional patterns are needed. It is useful to seize these mini-crises as opportunities to evaluate how the school is operating and to restructure where necessary.

The King Philip experience demonstrates that aside from a sound academic and vocational curriculum, and a socially conscious, well-formulated ideology, that an alternative school needs to build into its structure mechanisms which will foster sound, growth-promoting, family system dynamics. Such a system includes clear expectations and limits within a flexibly, yet well-structured environment. Subsystems include definite boundaries to encourage both interpersonal interactions and appropriate autonomy. It ought to operate as a just order to which all are similarly accountable within a trusting, secure framework. The transactional patterns should help it pass through developmental phases and transitions with flexibility and purpose so that it can restructure when needed. At the same time, the students' families should be authentically involved in the school process and each student's background understood. Similarly, all staff members need to also work on their own family of origin and relationship issues so that those that are unresolved do not interfere with the school process or contribute to destructive patterns. There ought to be a strong, competent director who is able to provide sensitive leadership and co-ordinate the many components of the school, and a family therapist to focus on the underlying interpersonal process. In this way, just as is the case with family therapy, the school is not only a healer in the present but also prevents the continuation of negative patterns in the future. This is accomplished by providing the families with a model of family functioning to which they can refer, and the students a model of family functioning which they can not only use in their families of origin but in their own families to come.

The next section uses the conclusions drawn in this section regarding the "healthy" family and the "healthy" school to describe the adolescent separation process and ways in which it can be better understood and dealt with in the alternative school.

THE ADOLESCENT SEPARATION PROCESS

Application #12: A primary dynamic within the alternative school of the adolescent is the adolescent family separation process. This section includes the following: a description of the family system properties in an alternative school conducive to a smooth adolescent separation process; ramifications of the separation process for students, staff and parents in the alternative school; ways of promoting differentiation within and between subsystems in the school using examples from King Philip; a discussion of the child-adult ambivalence felt by the adolescent and how it was handled at King Philip; the function of the multiple family group at King Philip and the way in which it focused on the separation process.

One of the primary reasons for incorporating structural properties conducive to healthy family system dynamics in the alternative school is to create the kind of environment inclined towards supporting and encouraging a sound adolescent separation process. Such a process is one which creates conditions tending to promote the individuation of the child from adult authority figures in a relatively smooth manner so that emotional attachments can be

resolved with a modicum of tension and guilt. In this way the child is helped to become a highly differentiated individual with the ability to form enriching relationships and a strong, functional identity.

The separation process is an issue for everyone at any stage of life. It is more of an issue for those whose separations from their families of origin were very difficult and were never really satisfactorily dealt with. The more unresolved the issues of separation are, the lower the level of differentiation of self one is able to achieve and the greater will be the chance of family emotional issues interfering with social, work and personal relationships. The parent-child separation process crystallizes and often reaches a crisis point when the child becomes an adolescent. The ability to form close relationships and develop a separate sense of self is to some degree predicated on how the separation issues were handled during adolescence. One's competence and effectiveness as a parent is related to how one was parented and the kinds of emotional issues which arose during adolescence.

In Chapter II issues surrounding "Adolescence and Separation" were discussed. The seeking of partners and values outside the family, the need for a rebalancing of loyalties, the conflict between being neither a child nor an adult, the opposing feelings of attachment to parents and emerging autonomy, and the parents own feelings about reaching middle-age, were topics for consideration. These same dynamics must be considered in the alternative school setting. Although more apparent in the family of origin, they play a large part in the emotionally charged atmosphere of the school. It has been

clearly established throughout this study that upon entering the school one does not automatically leave one's family home. Those family separation issues are an integral part of the overall school process.

Therefore, in structuring an alternative school for adolescents one must take into consideration the family system dynamics which constitute the separation process. In attempting to create a healthy family milieu within the school those separation dynamics are always present, demanding attention. The structure of the school reflects the way in which those issues are or are not confronted. Each structure, whether it is articulated or not, implicitly includes: an ordering of interpersonal relatedness within and among subsystems; rules, expectations and boundaries; a system of priorities; and an ideological stance. It is a contention of this study that in order to create the healthy family system dynamics which determine the quality of the underlying process in the school, such factors must be clearly delineated.

The kinds of healthy family dynamics which are structured into the alternative school experience (discussed in the previous section) are also likely to create the conditions necessary for a well functioning differentiation process. They include such components as functional transactional patterns, subsystems with clear lines of authority and boundaries, legitimate rules and expectations within a flexible and just framework, and a secure sense of community. The development of such a healthy family milieu in the school environment is helpful to the adolescent separation process in a number of different ways:

1) Within the school the students are able to attempt differentiating from adult

authority figures (staff) in an appropriate environment and then can apply what they have learned to their ongoing separation from their own families of origin. 2) It can help them to feel comfortable and confident within their student/sibling subsystem so that they can begin to depend more on peer support and less on parental authority. 3) They can test their expectations and emerging identities within a secure environment and apply their new knowledge about themselves to outside situations. This includes experimenting with both child and adult roles. 4) At the same time, through family therapy and the multiple-family group, the families of the students are helped to: learn how to let go of their children when necessary; deal with how their children's separation from them affects their own daily lives; and work out a comfortable way of handling their children's (and their) conflicting needs for dependence and autonomy. Ultimately, these processes ought to encourage the student to separate cleanly from both the school and her family and emerge as a capable, differentiated individual.

Self-governance: The promotion of differentiation, self-reliance and peer support in the school.

One way of promoting differentiation within the student/sibling subsystem and helping them to learn to take more responsibility for their own lives, is to guide them towards becoming self-governing. This does not mean merely saying to them, "Okay, it's your school, you run it." Instead,

it means creating the kind of environment which eventually and naturally leads to the students taking more control of their education and lives, similar to the kind of family environment which is most conducive to the adolescent's emerging autonomy. A first step is to provide a setting in which they are encouraged to monitor themselves and each other in a responsible and meaningful way. For instance, there was an agreement at King Philip that if someone were absent they would call the school and explain why they wouldn't be attending that day. If someone didn't call, then they were called. This became a very effective system because the students, without prodding, began assuming responsibility for making the calls, as they started feeling a real commitment towards the school. In fact, after the first few months of school the students telephoned absent students entirely on their own. If they were unable to get in touch with them, then the director handled it the next day. And if it started to be chronic the whole group (students and staff) discussed it at the Friday morning meeting.

Those Friday morning meetings were another example of students learning to take responsibility for their actions and for keeping the school together. The staff tried not to play a dominant role but instead allowed the students to take leadership roles. In these meetings, and in other similar instances, the students worked at being able to form independent opinions (which might be unpopular), confront one another, support each other, and make group decisions. Fridays were also a time to reaffirm a sense of unity, closeness and care. The importance of such times may be underestimated. That mistake was once made at King Philip. Choosing a Friday event had become

very difficult; each Friday the students complained about the decision. As a result, at a Thursday afternoon staff meeting the staff decided to change the structure of Fridays so that it would be similar to a regular day. The staff was surprised to find that the students were furious. When they were told that it had been done because they always complained and seemed dissatisfied, they explained that they always looked forward to Fridays and that the complaining was an expected part of Friday. They said that it would not be Friday if they did not complain! The staff told them how the complaining made them feel and and an agreement was reached that the students would take more responsibility for it and do less complaining and Fridays would proceed as usual.

It is nearly a truism now to say that an unpunished child feels unloved by her parents. Such was also the case at King Philip. Often a student would go through a testing out period with the director. This took such forms as chronically coming in late or arriving back from lunch somewhat drunk or high, in order to see whether the director cared enough to spend time reprimanding her. One striking example of that occurred during the second year of school when there was a period of weeks where the director was so involved in administrative paperwork that she did not have time to relax and leisurely talk with the students. The students were going through an acting-out period then, and during a Friday morning meeting it was disclosed that one reason for their acting-out was to get more attention from the director. A familiar family dynamic. Another similar instance occurred when a student had been absent for two and a half days and when she came in the next day no one said anything.

A few days later the same thing happened, but this time when she walked in she was questioned. She said that she had done it again because nobody had said anything a few days earlier. After talking it became clear that when she had not been confronted she assumed that no one cared about her. In such instances once the staff member involved realized what was happening, she was more able to effectively deal with the occurrence.

Facilitating the transition to the adult role in the school and adolescent ambivalence: the need to be both adult and child

Much has been said about the plight of today's adolescent who is neither a child nor an adult and does not quite know what is expected of her.[3] During King Philip's Foxfire project the students were interviewing a 94 year old man who takes care of a church up in the hills of Colrain. He said that in his day there was no such thing as a teen-ager. When a boy was 14 he became a young man and a girl at that age a young lady because they were ready to do a man's or a woman's work. They were not, for an extended period of time, suspended between realities.

A way of helping students feel more confident and ease their transition to the adult role is to work with them on figuring out what they want to do with their lives. King Philip's strong academic and apprenticeship programs were geared towards having the students develop solid cognitive and vocational skills. The students were provided with the structure within which they tried out apprenticeships and other learning experiences without having to constantly fear failure.

The staff also had to remember not to encourage the students to assume too many adult-like responsibilities. Just as a healthy family allows the adolescent to try out adult roles while at the same time permitting them to live their childhood freely, at King Philip the staff tried to create that same balance. In fact, many of the students had been so burdened by their family's worries that their childhoods had been abbreviated. An example of how the staff was reminded of the need for that balance occurred when a new policy was being considered regarding the minimal entering age for potential students. At one time only students who had reached fifteen years old were accepted. The events leading to the inclusion of thirteen and fourteen year olds started with a discussion regarding whether or not to take younger students. The staff had interviewed a few younger students and presented the question to everyone. There was one particular student they were excited about accepting. He was thirteen and when he came to see the school his clearly dominating parents escorted him; he seemed uncomfortable, angry and rebellious. Later, when everyone discussed the added responsibility it would mean for everyone--students and staff--to take in younger students, many students expressed eagerness at having this thirteen year old because they empathized with what he was going through (many said they had gone through the same thing with their families) and wanted to help him. They also expressed the need to experience his youthful energetic spirit. One student said, "We could use some young blood," and the other students agreed. At 15, many had become old and depressed.

King Philip tried to be the kind of place where students felt comfortable and trusting enough to enjoy things that they considered to be childish, in order to be able to experience that part of themselves. For many it had become too dangerous to accept those feelings; the vulnerability attached to being as open and authentic as a child could be was very threatening. Those rare instances when the students let the staff in on who they really were and their real world of experience were uniquely special. One particular Friday morning group meeting stands out as such a time. The following was discussed. The old students let the new students (who had been treating the school with disrespect, as if it were the public school) know what King Philip was really about and how the teachers weren't "teachers," and that the idea was to be a part of the King Philip community, not to just try and manipulate everyone. Two of the old students said that King Philip students are "misfits" in the sense that they are "real" and therefore don't play the games everyone plays in the public schools just in order to be liked or to be part of an "in" crowd. Another student talked about the fact that her grandmother was dying and what she was going through and that she chose to come to school instead of staying home crying and feeling depressed. One of the younger students told everyone that he had a pet rat that he wanted to bring to school and show them. Two boys who had been continually irritating each other finally talked to one another about what was really going on between them. Joseph described the ferrier school he was going to attend.

It was the kind of process described above where students learned to feel safe and accepted enough to express their pain, that allowed them to move forward and grow. A growing body of literature, e.g. "Four Issues in the Developmental Psychology of Adolescents" by Danial and Judith Offer in Modern Perspectives in Adolescent Psychiatry, edited by Howells, indicates it is very difficult to become a well-functioning, secure adult if one has not been given the chance to be a child and feel accepted. An indication of such progress, for instance, occurred when a 13 year old student who ordinarily sat curled up in a chair, consumed by her inner thoughts and pain, began acting more a child, singing childish songs, writing innocent adventure stories about herself and animals, and playing parcheesi and checkers. One cannot truly differentiate until one has learned how to feel god about all the different parts of one's self.

At this time and in this culture adolescence is an extremely difficult period of time. At a group meeting the staff was discussing the poor attendance and poor participation in the school during the preceding few weeks, and one student said, "You should think back to when you were our age, and how much you had on your mind and were having trouble with." A teacher replied that it only increases as you get older. The student answered, "Maybe that's true, but at least when you're older you know how to handle it." Hopefully, that is true; part of the separation process should be learning how to deal with life anxieties on one's own without becoming incapacitated. Again, a healthy family milieu is one which encourages that.

The dilemma of the adolescent parent: the multiple family group

The conflict which so many students felt between being a child and an adult was continually reinforced by their parents, who tended to double-bind them by creating expectations and demands which could not be met, namely, demanding that their children grow up and remain dependent at the same time. Such a conflict was epitomized by the struggle one King Philip student was having with his parents over his attempts to individuate, as expressed through his fantasies and dreams. During a particularly difficult time, when the students in a writing class were asked to write about what they would like to be re-incarnated as, this particular student immediately and without hestitation said, "An ostrich." Two of his dreams at that time were expressions of his attempts at differentiation. In one dream he was trying to get across a road crawling and his nails were clawing the sticky tar. He wasn't able to get them free. A car came and ran him over before he was able to get across. In the other dream he was crawling across the desert and again was having a lot of trouble moving when suddenly a giant steamroller flattened him.

The multiple-family group had been conceptualized as a family support group, during which families could share joys and pains and learn how to turn to one another for help, parents and children could learn how to communicate better with one another, and families could be kept informed about how things were going in the school. The family therapist and director started the group with no other very particular expectations. The group's direction and the

actual issues on which they were interested in focusing were going to be decided by the group. What evolved during the group's two years together, was that the primary issue for everyone was that of separation. No one actually articulated it as such for a while. It was expressed in a variety of ways, and no one was really aware of the fact that they were all talking about the problems they were having letting go of their children, and how that related to their feelings about their own lives and expectations. Instead, they tended to focus on issues which related to the problems they were experiencing with their children, often seeing their children as the "problem." These were articulated in terms of their children staying out too late, having friends they didn't approve of, not letting them know where they were or what they were doing, consuming drugs and alcohol, and running away from home.

At some point it was realized that these and many other issues were very much related to each other in that they were all ways of expressing the pain parents and children were experiencing over the children's evolving individuation. Almost all of the students were either only children or the oldest child in their family, and it was the first time their parents had had to deal with their child reaching adolescence. Invariably, they reacted with fear and many attempted to draw their children even closer into the family. Especially those with just one child (and no husband in many instances), felt abandoned and lonely because of their child's new outside interests and loyalties. A few tried living vicariously through their child's life and others dealt with the pain of separation by saying they had given up on their child, and let her do whatever

she wanted. Thus, they tended to either bind, delegate, or expel their children, in an extreme way, but were unable to find an appropriate balance among and within those transactional modes.

As the group progressed they began talking directly about separation and adolescence in the families, and focusing on how each family was dealing with it. As parents began to talk more openly about their fears they were able to share with one another and help each other because they realized that they were all having similar problems, although they were sometimes expressed differently. During one group meeting what became clear was the incredible investment the parents had in their children's lives and the overwhelming need to be part of their lives. They claimed they were living their lives for their children. One mother said of her only daughter, "If she ever died, I would die within two hours after." Many of these people felt their lives would be empty if they didn't have their children. And it was clear in others that without the children the marriage would have fallen apart long ago.

The group encouraged the parents to work on their relationship with their children, their marital relationship, and occasionally their relationship with their own parents. It also concentrated on having each parent talk about one particular way they would like to change their own lives, separate from anything to do with their children. Upon enriching their own lives they would thereby be less apt to try to control and depend on their children. They attempted to set realistic, tangible goals for themselves which they would be able to accomplish,

and the family therapist explained to them that the best they could do for their children was begin to take better care of themselves. In this manner the family therapist attempted to create more appropriate boundaries around subsystems and help the family to restructure itself so as to allow their children to differentiate in a growth-promoting, constructive way.

Progress in the group was very slow. Approximately nine families were involved in an ongoing process, and usually four or five families would attend at one time. One problem was that it was very often four or five different families who would attend, rarely the same group, so that any feeling of solidarity and sharing which was built up in one single meeting had to be rekindled again the next time with a whole different set of families. This was a main obstacle to creating consistency and progress. The productive moments occurred when, for instance, a child and parent were able to get close to one another in a non-destructive way, or a husband and wife were able to reaffirm their good feelings toward one another, or someone openly shared a painful experience and was helped through it, or an individual was helped to make a needed change in her life. It was also a way to keep the families involved in their children's education in an appropriate way and a safe place where they could come together just to be together.

This chapter concludes the application of the conceptual framework developed in Chapter II to alternative education. The following six applications were presented:

1. The therapeutic process: stages, diagnosis, contracts, goals, change.

2. Role and technique of the family therapist in the alternative school.
3. Role and technique of the family therapist in King Philip.
4. Concepts of health, pathology and normality.
5. The "healthy" alternative school family milieu.
6. The adolescent separation process in the alternative school.

Chapter V presents the summary and conclusions, directions for future research, and implications for practice.

FOOTNOTES

[1] P. Goodman, Compulsory Mis-Education, (New York: Vintage, 1962); and S. Kimball and J. McClellan, Jr., Education and the New America (New York: Vintage, 1962).

[2] Ray C. Rist, "Student Social Class and Teacher Expectations," and Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jackson, Pygmalion in the Classroom.

[3] Boszormenyi-Nagy, I., op. cit., p. 22; Kenniston, Kenneth, op. cit., p. 209..

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH
INDICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This chapter summarizes the study and elaborates on its rationale and conceptualization. Suggestions for future research applicable to issues raised in this study, and the practical application of the findings, are also presented.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to develop a conceptual model for defining and evaluating the underlying interpersonal process inherent to the alternative school. As described in Chapter I, the alternative school under study is one with a particular ideological stance and social mission. The structure and function of such an alternative school was depicted in terms of family systems theory according to four major theorists: Minuchin, Bowen, Stierlin and Boszormenyi-Nagy. Their therapeutic work with families was delineated in terms of how they portrayed the family as a system, the family therapeutic process, concepts of health and pathology, and the separation process of the family of the adolescent, in order to construct a conceptual framework which

was then applied to the analysis of alternative education. Those family therapeutic principles were demonstrated to be applicable to the alternative school in terms of seeing the school's process as similar to the family system process. Thus, the school as family system, the school's therapeutic process, and concepts of health and pathology and the adolescent separation process in the school, were described. The following is a brief summary of those findings.

The Conceptual Framework

Family Therapy

Within the field of family therapy there are many theorists, each of whom has a separate perspective and technique. What they all share is the belief that therapy should not focus on an individual's internal psychic process, but instead look at the family system dynamics which provide a contextual framework for interpersonal behavior. Rather than assign individual symptoms a medical label, they are seen as an indication of dysfunction in the family system. Of the family therapists studied, each has his own particular way of operating within that context: Boszormenyi-Nagy focuses on the multigenerational family system on a long-term basis in order to rebalance loyalty obligations and the ledger of justice; Minuchin is concerned with determining what the dysfunctional transactional patterns are in the family system in order to restructure their behavior so that the family will operate in a manner conducive to everyone's growth; Bowen postulates a differentiation of self process within which each family member works at individuating from other important family members,

in order to establish a separate sense of self.

The Family as a System

All three theorists describe the family as a system. As a system it contains interlocking relationships and mutually interdependent units, and a change in any one part of the system affects change in the other parts. Family systems are conservative and homeostatic in that they attempt to preserve and maintain themselves. Boszormenyi-Nagy adds to that a dialectical dimension which implies that the system is always in movement and transitional to what it is evolving towards; each individual in such a system is responsible for and accountable to every other person. The family system is affected by other systems and is composed of subsystems, such as the marital, parental, and sibling, each which has its own boundaries and rules. The process within and among the subsystems is articulated in terms of transactional patterns (according to Minuchin) and the triangling process (according to Bowen). They regulate the behavior of members and indicate emotional alliances and levels of anxiety. Each family system goes through developmental stages. The way in which the family handles the developmental transitions and concomitant stresses is a good indication of how well it functions and its ability to tolerate the change and growth inherent to that process. According to Boszormenyi-Nagy, a primary dynamic within that developmental process is continual evolvement of a multigenerational ledger of justice which includes each individual's accounting of merits and indebtedness, and the striving to balance loyalty obligations.

The Family Therapeutic Process

The family therapeutic process is composed of non-sequential phases which focus on turning an individual label of pathology into a diagnosis that includes the whole family system, evaluating the family, and determining goals and techniques. Depth and duration vary from family to family, and change is aimed at the entire family. Actual techniques for facilitating change differ among family therapists: Minuchin describes three inseparable steps, and joining and accommodation techniques which encourage the transformation of the family system; Bowen discusses how the therapist determines the triangle configurations in the family and helps members to detriangle in order to reach higher levels of differentiation; Boszormenyi-Nagy focuses on helping members of the multigenerational family system balance their ledgers of justice and restructure loyalty obligations which exert a strong influence on the family dynamics.

Concepts of Health and Pathology

According to family therapists, family systems are not absolutely normal or abnormal, healthy or pathological. Families are constantly in transition and at times of stress may develop dysfunctional transactional patterns and imbalanced relational configurations. When those dynamics continually recur or intensify, often one member of the family (the "identified patient") acts as a scapegoat in expressing the family's dysfunction and pain. Often that individual is a child in the family who becomes depressed, begins to

act-out in a variety of different ways, or develops a psychosomatic illness. At its best, family therapy is preventative in that it attempts to block the intergenerational transmission of destructive patterns and behavior. The children of the present and future families benefit directly from the alleviation of the anxiety and emotional attachedness, the rebalancing of loyalties, and the transformation of dysfunctional patterns. A relatively "healthy" family system is one which includes a trustworthy, just order with clear rules and boundaries around subsystems, and the ability to flexibly restructure when necessary. That overall process should encourage the gradual differentiation of members into appropriately individuated and autonomous, yet emotionally available and connected, individuals.

The Family of the Adolescent/The Separation Process

The process of separation within the family system is a constant throughout, but often is most intensely experienced when a child in the family reaches adolescence. The forces of individuation and relational forces are in continual tension; the therapeutic process combines the preservation of autonomy and the support of mutuality. According to Boszormenyi-Nagy, a major dynamic which causes tension in the separation process is that the family often interprets emotional maturation as disloyalty, especially in the adolescent who is beginning to develop interests and friends outside the family. Bowen's concept of the differentiation of self is the process wherein the child learns how to differentiate from her parents and define a separate self which is emotionally autonomous.

The way the parents handle the separation process is directly connected to how it was dealt with in their families of origin. The parents' differentiation from their parents affects their children's differentiation from them.

According to Stierlin, the adolescent period is often a difficult transitional stage for families because of the difficulty in incorporating the child's emerging autonomy into the already established family patterns, and because of the lack of preparedness many parents feel towards their own approaching middle-age. The separation is determined by the dilalectical interplay between centripetal and centrifugal forces which are articulated in terms of three major transactional modes: binding, delegating and expelling. Each has an appropriate place and function within the developmental family process; difficulties occur when they are mixed or applied at the wrong time. Adolescents who are too intensely bound, delegated, or expelled by their parents have trouble differentiating and maturing. Stierlin posits that the mutual liberation of parent and child can occur through the parents reconciliation of "doing and undergoing" in terms of their work on their relationship with their own parents, their marriage, and/or their adolescent children. The mutual liberation is accomplished as the conflict between the generations is changed into a "loving fight."

The School as Family System

The system dynamics which characterize the family process are similar to those which operate in the alternative school. The school contains emotionally invested, interlocking relationships; each individual influences others, and the

entire system is affected by other outside systems. This occurs in a dialectical fashion, seeking to create transitional systemic homeostasis. Every individual in the school carries her own multigenerational past and often assumes roles in the school which are comparable to those assumed in the family of origin. As a system, the alternative school is composed of subsystems within which those involved learn differentiated tasks and roles, and a balance between mutual interdependency and autonomy. Subsystems include the parental, marital, sibling and extended family. The particular make-up of each differs from school to school, but generally the staff assumes parental, marital and extended family roles, while the students are members of the sibling subsystem. Composition of subsystems, boundaries, rules and lines of authority within and among them, and their ability to both maintain themselves and be flexible, are good indications of the overall organization, functioning capacity, strengths and weaknesses and emotional climate of the school. This in turn directly affects whether the school operates as a relatively functional or dysfunctional family system. Transactional patterns and the triangling process in the school indicate the quality and type of interpersonal relationships and expectations, both implicit and explicit. Dysfunctional transactional patterns are often symptomatic of diffuse subsystem boundaries, while intense triangling can indicate the occurrence of emotional enmeshment.

The alternative school and its various subsystems have separate (yet mutually influential) developmental processes within the context of the school, as do the staff, the students and the students' families within the context of their

own multigenerational backgrounds. The alternative school of the adolescent undergoes a developmental process similar to that of the family of the adolescent in terms of stages and transitional stresses. Transitions between phases require adjustment and flexibility. Schools (and families) differ in terms of how they deal with change and their ability to restructure with minimal anxiety and disturbance. The development of the school reflects the way in which the developmental processes of the students, families and staff are handled in the school. At the same time the school has a developmental process of its own which is articulated in terms of parenthood role cycle stages (anticipatory, honeymoon, plateau and disengagement-termination stages). Those stages are tied together by rituals and traditions which allow the school members to jointly experience and share their joys and pains.

Within that developmental framework the school also manifests justice and loyalty dynamics similar to those in the emotional system within the family. In order not to create or exacerbate loyalty conflicts for the student between her family and the school, the family ought to be included in the school process. The way the school functions and handles these issues can then additionally act as a model to the families, who are dealing with the same issues at home. The issue of justice is an important dynamic, especially during adolescence. Students in alternative schools from low-income homes are often the product of many years of public schooling where they internalized negative reputations which in many cases had been unjustly assigned to them.

The Alternative School's Therapeutic Process

The therapeutic process within the school is similar to the family therapeutic process as applied to one's family of origin. Minuchin's four non-sequential family therapy stages apply, as do the diagnostic and contractual dimensions. As is the case in the family, the family therapist's initial task is to change an individual diagnosis into one which includes the entire school. Family therapy intervention in the school may be crisis oriented or of a more long-term nature, depending on goals and objectives. Therapeutic intervention may focus on changing dysfunctional transactional patterns within the entire system or subsystems, and/or may work on differentiation issues within a primary triangle. Regardless of where the intervention starts, it will eventually affect the entire system. The amount of time and depth given to considering each individual's multigenerational background depends on the nature and duration of the therapeutic intervention. In any case, underlying justice implications and ethical issues ought to be continually recognized.

Concepts of Health and Pathology

Deviations from societal norms are often suspect. Thus, many people see alternative schools as places for students who are too disturbed and intellectually unable to conform to the public school's demands. That attitude can be contrasted with the one which assumes that often such a student's rebellion and disaffection is appropriate and willful. A child's self-concept can be severely impaired by societal (especially public education) attitudes which discredit the alienated

student's feelings and personhood by giving her a negative label which she cannot erase. In addition, without taking into consideration the student's home environment and family dynamics, the individual's normal problems or negative roles are often reinforced and exaggerated. Such a student never really has a chance.

The development of "healthy" family system dynamics in an alternative school is directly related to the creation of a "healthy" alternative school. Such a school allows the students to try out various roles while moving away from negative role patterns and behavior. Such a school is able to weather changes by rebalancing and adjusting during stressful transitional phases. Aside from academics, skill training, and ideological orientation, the school contains clearly defined subsystems within a just and secure framework articulated through functional transactional patterns and conducive to the individuation of all members, combining a balance between autonomy and mutuality.

The Adolescent Separation Process

All families constantly deal with issues relating to the continual, evolving separation between parents and children. The separation process is particularly pronounced when a child reaches adolescence. The alternative school of the adolescent, by creating healthy family system dynamics within the school, attempts to create conditions and a structure which will help the students and families learn how to effectively differentiate in a growth-promoting manner. This is accomplished on a number of different levels: students are encouraged to appropriately differentiate from adult authority figures in the school; the families are helped to understand the

multidimensional dynamics of the separation process and develop satisfying and functional ways of dealing with it; and the students are provided with opportunities to fully experience their often conflicting childish and newly emerging adult inclinations within a suitable, supportive structure.

Directions for Future Research: Process and Contents
The Economic Context

There is a plethora of material aimed at studying teaching techniques.[1] A major preoccupation of the system of public education is a continual search for what is considered to be the best and latest educational materials, appealingly packaged. It is popular these days to talk about choice and freedom and open classrooms and individualized learning. But what that "free choice" generally means is the student choosing to work with an "ecology unit" from Westinghouse, a colorful plant growing kit by Xerox, or a set of magnets by IBM. As Jonathan Kozol writes, they may be "free" to choose among various learning package, but

> if they have no freedom to choose to side in spirit and in fact with those who are the victims of the unjust allocation of resources which affords them privileges and pleasures such as these, to offer this 'beautiful freedom' in all things pertaining to an immediate kingdom of delight but no freedom in terms of access to data and openness to experience which, together, may be able to destroy or undermine the walls of anesthetic self-protection that surround the unreal world in which they live--to offer this kind of falsified freedom, in my judgment, is to purvey a very deep and desperate kind of servitude.[2]

Another type of reaction to these "open classroom" innovations attacks the problem from a different perspective. Referred to as the "back to basics"

movement, proponents claim that teaching reading, writing and arithmetic is the main function of schools. The teachers claim to use the standard basal readers and math texts within an authoritarian structure which requires uncritical respect for authority, the pledge of allegiance and prayer, uniforms, clasped hands, and standing in order to speak, and condones corporal punishment for those who digress.

A current educational experiment is the packaging of moral-dilemma discussions and ethical standards. Some of the most popular of these are the values-clarification kits. There are no "right" answers, and teachers like it precisely because of its supposed amorality; they don't have to decide which or whose values to inculcate in the students. The biggest danger inherent to these innovations lies in their deception and subtlety: there is no such thing as neutrality, students easily surmise what the teacher wants to hear indirectly through body language, tone of voice and leading questions; to assume a superficial neutrality is to teach the children that taking a stand is of no use or consequence; it ignores one of the most important educational experiences one can have, which is to be engaged in confrontation with someone who feels committed and invested in a point of view because of its wider justice implications; moreover, the choice of questions asked in these "moral studies" kits are not only trivial and simplistic, but their wording and the answers which are provided to select from are camouflaged in the normative societal standards.

One thing these educational trends have in common is the ignoring of or confusion towards the relationship between process and content and the affects

of social context. That is, their goals are clearly formulated in terms of the content (whether skills or informational) but they ignore the contribution process makes in creating the product of their goals. The result is that the goal is affected and changed by the process, and sometimes is in direct conflict with it. As a school counselor was reported to have said in an article about the kits which purport to teach morality: "The governance structure of many schools teaches students that in school they have no significant control over their lives; that they must conform to arbitrary rules or be punished; and that they should go along with what the majority thinks and does even when they disagree.' This is the 'hidden curriculum'."[3] In other words, why should a student take seriously an academic exercise in independent decision-making, ethical behavior and moral reasoning, when the hidden lesson she is constantly learning comes from the attitudes, rules and behavior of those around her in the school, which are in direct opposition to those ideal precepts. Moreover, as the author of the article states, "Before the schools can effectively provide moral education, the surrounding society must work to reform itself so that its members are less concerned with success and material achievements, and more concerned about quality of life and individual conduct."[4] The real lesson such students learn is one concerning societal weakness, cowardice and hypocrisy.

A guiding rationale behind this study was to show the connection between process and content. Subject matter studied and teaching methods employed in alternative schools were not of paramount importance in this study. The focus was on the interpersonal process which, as the hidden curriculum, provides the

framework which regulates and structures the content-oriented learning experiences. Process and content are dialectically and inextricably connected. One does not learn to read, for instance, simply through a set of instructions. The process (including teacher's attitudes, emotional climate in the school, explicit and implicit expectations, etc.) within which a student is being educated directly affects that student's ability to master the skill of reading, her feeling for the reading process, her like or dislike of learning, and her overall attitude towards the learning process and human relations. The pedagogical process which educators use is part and parcel of their stated educational goals.

There is no such thing as neutrality or impartiality. Every decision made, for example, about how to structure an alternative school is a choice, makes a statement, and has wide implications. If a professed goal of the school is to guide the students towards becoming self-sufficient, yet interpersonally responsive and responsible, highly differentiated, socially conscious, caring individuals then the school's underlying process ought to support those qualities. That is, the staff should structure the school in such a way that the message the students receive via their interactions with the staff regarding human relations and life attitudes will coincide with the school's explicit, verbalized goals and belief structure. It is primarily for that reason that the focus of this study was the application of family systems theory to alternative education. In positing the structural properties of a hypothetical "healthy" family system, what was being presented was a guideline for structuring an

alternative school which would then foster those same "healthy" family attributes. To put it rather simplistically, a healthy family (as discussed) fosters the emergence of healthy individuals; therefore, a healthy alternative school environment (similar to a healthy family system) should also encourage the development of the kind of healthy individuals described above.

The characteristics which indicate the strengths and purpose of this study at the same time reveal the study's weaknesses and limitations. While the study was successful in delineating the underlying process which determines the quality and type of learning experienced and in presenting a model framework developed from family systems theory, it only dealt briefly and superficially with the larger contextual dynamics, namely, the relationship between the society's social and economic structure and its educational system. Even though the process and content are complementary and mutually reinforcing in such an alternative school, such is not the case when one ventures outside the school. One way this can be dealt with, as described in the study, is through continually involving and educating the students' families. That is of critical importance and has tremendous effect, but is still only one of the major contextual elements. The larger societal dynamics remain. Thus, what the students and families and staff are experiencing in terms of human relationships and capabilities and goals directly conflict with societal standards that reinforce ruthlessness, competition, and the accumulation of material goods.

The danger inherent to principally focusing on interpersonal dynamics and therapeutic techniques is that one often tends to regard therapy as the

answer. Family therapists have removed themselves from the legions of psychodynamic clinicians who invision that change primarily occurs through an intrapsychic process facilitated by the therapist. In seeing human relationships within a systems framework, family therapists have moved away from that intrapsychic focus. Yet, their analysis of system dynamics often goes no farther than looking at the individual's multigenerational family background. In some cases the ills of the world are seen as emanating from the multigenerational transmission process wherein pathological ways of relating are passed on through the generations. Thus, society is viewed as a conglomeration of dysfunctional intergenerational family patterns reacting with one another. The assumption is that a change in society principally emanates from change in the family system. Boszormenyi-Nagy for one, makes many statements which indicate that he sees the societal rebalancing of the ledger of justice and loyalty obligations, and the function of relational dynamics to be of primary concern. For instance, he states: "We hold the opinion that the crisis of the contemporary family and of society as a whole is related to a trend toward collusive denial of invisible loyalties, intrinsic responsibilities, and their underlying ethical meaning."[5] "The greatest cultural task of our age might be the investigation of the role of relational, not merely economic, justice in contemporary society."[6]

It is my contention that interpersonal and societal justice are the result of a just economic order, not the other way around. The quality of human relations is directly related to the economic structure of the society. There is no way to

have a truly egalitarian, just order when wealth is unequally distributed and property relations are the primary dynamic in human relationships. Such is the case in capitalist society. Moreover, the family becomes merely another instrument for the perpetuation of that economic order and thereby develops anxiety laden, reified family relationships. As Engels wrote:

> According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of immediate life. This, again, is of a twofold character: on the one side, the production of the means of existence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social organization under which the people of a particular historical epoch and a particular country live is determined by both kinds of production: by the stage of the development of labor on the one hand and of the family on the other. . . the productivity of labor increasingly develops, and with it private property and exchange, differences of wealth, the possibility of utilizing the labor power of others, and hence the basis of class antagonisms. . . (There) appears a new society,. . . a society in which the system of the family is completely dominated by the system of property. . . "[7]

Engels traces the origin of the estranged family back to the origin of private property. Such family dynamics were created in order to pass on fixed wealth, which had never before existed. He states, "It was the first form of the family based not on natural but on economic conditions, namely, on the victory of private property over original, naturally developed, common ownership."[8] And Marx adds, "(The modern family) contains in miniature all the contradictions which later extend throughout society and its state."[9]

This is a necessarily cursory treatment of a profoundly complex issue. It is included here in order to point out areas of future research. The next step for this study, in order to take into consideration the economic and political dimensions influencing family structure and the educational process, would be to provide an economic analysis as the larger contextual framework. That is, family system dynamics as applied to alternative education is one major step. To study the interrelationship between such an alternative school and the economic system would be another major step. Potential hypotheses to test might be along these lines: In what way is an economic system the ultimate force determining the quality of human relationships? In what ways are the current unhappiness and intense continual conflict in the family influenced by economics? How can an alternative school, modeled along healthy family principles, take into consideration the economic dimension? How can such an alternative school act as an instrument for economic and political change?

Directions for Future Research: Further application of the family systems model as applied to alternative education and beyond

1. Further study the conceptual model presented here in order to determine whether it is a workable model for other alternative schools. One method might be to employ the participant-observation model in investigating another alternative school, and using that school as a case study.
2. Are there limitations to the model? Are there specific characteristics which an alternative school must incorporate in order for the family

systems model to be applicable? Such dimensions might include: size, composition, locale, funding, student-staff ratio, ideological/political stance and goals.

3. What are the long-term affects of the family systems model as applied to alternative education in terms of growth and change in students, families and staff? This presupposes a longitudinal study. It seems that it would be particularly effective if the school and its members existed together for minimally four years.
4. Investigate how the students, families and staff actually saw the school process. Do they articulate the same kinds of family process dynamics described in this study?
5. Can this family systems model be further applied to other alternative organizations? What are the limitations? Can it be applied to effecting change within traditional organizational structures? What are the limitations?

Implications for Practice

This study should be useful to alternative school practitioners, alternative organization practitioners, change agents within traditional organizations, consultants to all of the above, and family therapists. Within each specific context it can be applicable in some of the following ways:

1. Clarification of goals
2. Evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of the structure
3. Intervention procedure in a crisis

4. Directions and methods for effecting change
5. Understanding the psycho-social framework for analyzing organizational structure and behavior
6. Analyzing daily operations and interpersonal dynamics

For family therapists in particular it can provide them with a therapeutic consultation design for using family therapy within organizations.

One reason the staff of an alternative school may have chronic difficulties is their failure to recognize the family system dynamics present. Regardless of whether or not they are acknowledged, they exist. When not taken into consideration they are apt to critically interfere with the interpersonal and developmental process of the school. The following recommendations are specifically for practitioners and consultants in alternative schools, or those about to start one:

1. Hire a family therapist as a member of the staff to work with students, families and staff.
2. Include the students' families in the school (e.g., as members of the governing structure, possible resource teachers, and therapeutically).
3. Include rituals and traditions in the school's structure.
4. Clearly identify the components of the school's hierarchical structure (including lines of authority, boundaries, roles).
5. The school's ongoing survival struggle can provide a valuable and legitimate learning experience for everyone.
6. The school's structure ought to be well-defined and strong, yet flexible and responsive.
7. The school's environment should feel warm, inviting, accepting and cozy.
8. Staff should work on their own differentiation and family of origin issues so they do not interfere with the school's progress.
9. The personality, character and abilities of the director are of paramount importance. That person ought to have a basic operable understanding of the dynamics described in this study and the strength, sensitivity, and vision to carry them through.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Joseph Featherstone, Schools Where Children Learn (New York: Avon, 1971).

[2] J. Kozol, Free Schools, (New York: Bantam, 1972), p. 97.

[3] Amitai Etzioni, "Do As I Say, Not As I Do," New York Times Magazine, September 26, 1976, p. 66.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Boszormenyi-Nagy, I., Invisible Loyalties, p. 111.

[6] Ibid., p. 74.

[7] F. Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State, p. 72.

[8] Ibid., p. 128.

[9] Ibid., p. 122.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibliography

Ackerman, N. W. The Psychodynamics of Family Life. New York: Basic Books, 1958.

Ackerman, N. W. Treating the Troubled Family. New York: Basic Books, 1966.

Anonymous. "Toward the Differentiation of a Self in One's Own Family," in Family Interaction, edited by J. Framo New York: Springer, 1972.

Arieti, S. Ed. American Handbook of Psychiatry. New York: Basic Books, 1959.

Barr, Robert. "Curriculum in Optional Alternative Schools," Position paper prepared for the National Institute of Education's Development Conference of Policy Problems in Educational Options, June 29, 30, July 1, 1976, Sheraton-Chicago Hotel.

Bell, N. W. & Vogel, E. F. Eds. A Modern Introduction to the Family. New York: Free Press, 1960.

Bennett, Chester C. "Community Psychology: Impressions of the Boston Conference on the Education of Psychologists for Community Mental Health," American Psychologist, October, 1965.

Boszormenyi-Nagy, I. & Framo, J. L. Eds. Intensive Family Therapy: Theoretical and Practical Aspects. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.

Boszormenyi-Nagy, I. Invisible Loyalties. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

Bottomore, T. B. Ed. Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy. New York: McGraw Hill, 1956.

Bowen, M. Family Therapy After Twenty Years. Unedited draft, chapter for handbook of psychiatry.

Bowen, Murray. "Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Family of Origin," Georgetown Family Symposia Vol. I, 1971-1972, (c) 1974. A collection of selected papers edited by Frances D. Andres and Joseph P. Lorio.

Bowen, Murray. "Toward the Differentiation of Self in Administrative Systems," Georgetown Family Symposia Vol. I, 1971-1972, (c) 1974. A collection of selected papers edited by Frances D. Andres and Joseph P. Lorio.

Bowen, Murray. "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," in Changing Families, Jay Haley, Ed. New York: Grune & Stratton, 1971.

Bowen, Murray. "A Family Concept of Schizophrenia," in The Etiology of Schizophrenia, D. D. Jackson, Ed. New York: Basic Books, 1960.

Bruner, Jerome S. Toward a Theory of Instruction. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966.

Chall, Jeanne. Learning to Read: The Great Debate. New York: McGraw Hill, 1967.

Dennison, G. The Lives of Children. New York: Avon, 1970.

Easton, L. & Guddat, M. Ed. Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society. New York: Anchor, 1967.

Eaton, J. Political Economy. New York: International Publishers, 1963.

Engels, F. The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. Chicago: Charles H. Merr, 1902.

Engels, F. The Woman Question. New York: International, 1951.

Erikson, Erik H., Ed. The Challenge of Youth. American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1961.

Etzioni, Amitai. "Do As I Say, Not As I Do," New York Times Magazine, September 26, 1976, 14, 44, 45, 65, 66.

Fantini, Mario. Public Schools of Choice: A Plan for the Reform of American Education. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973.

Featherstone, Joseph. Schools Where Children Learn. New York: Avon, 1971.

Ferber, A., Mendelsohn, M., & Napier, A. The Book of Family Therapy. Boston: Science House, 1972.

Feuer, L., Ed. Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy. New York: Anchor, 1959.

Freire, P. Education for Critical Consciousness. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.

Freire, P. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Herder & Herder, 1972.

Friedenberg, Edgar Z. "School's Out," New York Review of Books, 11/27/55.

Goodman, P. Compulsory Mis-Education. New York: Vintage, 1962.

Goodman, P. Growing Up Absurd. New York: Vintage, 1956.

Graubard, Allen. Free the Children: Radical Reform and the Free School Movement. New York: Vintage, 1972.

Greer, Colin. The Great School Legend. New York: Viking Press, 1973.

Haley, J. Ed. Changing Families. New York: Grune & Stratton, 1971.

Haley, J. Strategies of Psychotherapy. New York: Grune & Stratton, 1963.

Haley, J. & Hoffman, L. Techniques of Family Therapy. New York: Basic Books, 1967.

Handel, G. The Psychosocial Interior of the Family. Chicago: Aldine, 1967.

Hentoff, N. Our Children are Dying. New York: Viking, 1966.

Herndon, J. How to Survive in Your Native Land. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971.

Herndon, J. The Way It Spozed to Be. New York: Bantam, 1965.

Hersey, Paul and Kenneth H. Blanchard. The Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1969.

Holt, J. Letter to the Editor of the New York Times Magazine, May 1, 1977, pp. 16, 18.

Holt, J. How Children Fail. New York: Dell, 1964.

Holt, J. How Children Learn. New York: Pitman, 1967.

Holt, J. What Do I Do Monday? New York: Dutton, 1970.

Howe, F. The Future of the Family. New York: Touchstone, 1972.

Howells, John G., Ed. Modern Perspectives in Adolescent Psychiatry. New York: Brunner/Mazel, Inc., 1971.

Illich, I. Deschooling Society. New York: Harrow, 1970.

Jackson, D. D. Ed. The Etiology of Schizophrenia. New York: Basic Books, 1960.

Kelly, James G. "The Community Psychologist's Roles in Community Research: Creating Trust and Managing Power," Paper presented at the symposium "Knowledge and Technology in Community Psychology" at the 82nd Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, 9/1/74.

Kelman, H. C. "The Rights of the Subject in Social Research: An Analysis in Terms of Relative Power and Legitimacy," American Psychologist, 1972, V. 27, 989-1016.

Kenniston, Kenneth. "Social Change and Youth in America," in Erik H. Erikson, Ed. The Challenge of Youth. American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1961.

Kimball, S. and J. McClellan, Jr. Education and the New America. New York: Vintage, 1962.

Kline, Morris. Why Johnny Can't Add: The Failure of the New Math. New York: Random House, 1973.

Kohl, H. 36 Children. New York: Signet, 1967.

Kozol, J. Death At An Early Age. New York: Bantam, 1967.

Kozol, J. Free Schools. New York: Bantam, 1972.

Kozol, J. The Night Is Dark and I Am Far From Home. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1975.

Laing, R. D. Knots. New York: Pantheon, 1970.

Laing, R. D. Sanity, Madness and the Family. New York: Penguin, 1964.

Laing, R. D. The Politics of the Family and Other Essays. New York: Vintage, 1972.

Lenin, V. I. Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. New York: International Pub., 1939.

Lenin, V. I. The Teachings of Karl Marx. New York: International Pub., 1930.

Mays, John B. "The Adolescent as a Social Being," in John G. Howells, Ed. Modern Perspectives in Adolescent Psychiatry. New York: Brunner/ Mazel, Inc., 1971.

Marx, K. Capital. New York: Dutton, 1937.

Marx, K. The Communist Manifesto. Chicago: Cateway, 1954.

Marx, K. Wage-Laborer and Capital. New York: International Pub., 1933.

McDonough, Terry. "Alternatives and Alienation: The Oppression of the Public Alternative School Staffer," Edcentric, #37, Feb-March, 1976.

Mendel, A. P. Essential Works of Marxism. New York: Bantam, 1961.

Minard, Sally. "Family Systems Model in Organizational Consultation: Vignettes of Consultation to a Day-Care Center," Family Process, V. 15 #3, 9/76, 313-320.

Minuchin, S. Families and Family Therapy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Minuchin, S. "Structural Family Therapy," in Silvano Arien, Ed. American Handbook of Psychiatry, Vol. II, Chap. 11. New York: Basic Books, 1974.

Neill, A. S. Summerhill. New York: Hart, 1960.

Offer, Daniel and Judith Offer. "Four Issues in the Developmental Psychology of Adolescents," in John G. Howells, Ed. Modern Perspectives in Adolescent Psychiatry. New York: Brunner/Mazel, Inc., 1971.

O'Gorman, N. The Wilderness and the Laurel Tree. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Pepo, S. Ed. This Book is About Schools. New York: Pantheon, 1970.

Postman, Neil and Charles Weingartner. Teaching as a Subversive Activity. New York: Delacorte Press, 1969.

Rist, Ray C. "Student Social Class and Teacher Expectations: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy in Ghetto Education," Harvard Educational Review, 40, 3, 8/70.

Rosenthal, Robert and Lenor Jackson. Pygmalion in the Classroom. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

Rossi, Alice. "Transition to Parenthood," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Feb. 1968, 26-39.

Sager, C. and Kaplan, H. S. Eds. Progress in Group and Family Therapy. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1972.

Schoolboys of Barbiana. Letter to a Teacher. New York: Vintage, 1970.

Skolnock, A. and J. Skolnick. Family in Transition. Boston: Little Brown, 1971.

Skolnick, A. and J. Skolnick. Intimacy, Family and Society. Boston: Little Brown, 1974.

Speck, R. V. and Attneave, C. L. Family Networks. New York: Vintage, 1974.

Stalin, J. Dialectical and Historical Materialism. New York: International, 1940.

Stierlin, Helm. Separating Parents and Adolescents. New York: Quadrangle/ NY Times Book Co., 1974.

Thompson, G. From Marx to Mao Tse-Tung: A Study in Revolutionary Dialectics. London: China Policy Study Group, 1971.

Tolstoy, L. On Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

Yorburg, B. The Changing Family. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.

APPENDIX

Representative entries from the author's journal notebooks

(Pseudonyms have been used to protect the individuals' identities)

1975

3/17 Interviewed a potential student from Turners who was describing how antagonistic the school officials are to KP & how they discourage people from trying to come here. She said she was told that she had to have a mental difficiency to come here, that her parents would be billed for the tuition, & that she should stay in Turners where they'd put her in special reading classes (she has no reading problem!) I asked her why she thought that was the case. She answered, "If everyone goes to schools like KP then won't be anyone to swim in their new pool."

1976

1/9 **John** was in his usual way acting angry at the whole world. He was yelling about having nothing to do and wanting to leave school early. He seemed all involved in his argument when **Bob** suddenly walked through the room (on his way to the office) whistling merrily, oblivious to the argument. Suddenly **John** noticed **Bob** walking through, made a complete about-face and followed **Bob** out of the room, smiling and whistling behind him as if in the best of all moods.

Tom said today: "I feel the same way about math as my father. I don't want to have anything to do with them."

1976

2/6 We visited Maple Valley school today. Although their vision is different from ours (in terms of their "Summerhillian" "free" perspective), the thing that seemed the most impressive to our students was the fact that the school is live-in. On the way back to school in the car they were excitedly talking about how nice it felt there and how it was like a family (everyone living together + sharing).
[It reminded me of our trip to N.Y.C. last year when we all spent the week-end together and the students started calling me "mommy" and talking about how we are all like a big family, and fantasizing about taking over Skip's & my house & using it as a live-in school.]
When we got back from Maple Valley it was almost 2:30 and time for everyone to leave. But five students

just
continued sitting around
and looked very depressed.
At 1st I didn't understand
because they had been so
buoyant & excited in
the car. It seemed clear
~~their~~ they were feeling bad
and needed ~~to~~ to talk.
We sat together sharing the
heaviness & talking for a
while and it suddenly
became clear that they
were depressed because
as soon as we arrived
back the reality of their
own lives hit them. As
Jane said, "Now I have
to go home to my alcoholic
father."

1976

2/12 Joe complained today because, as he put it, the assignment in art class had been to do a drawing — unrestricted + free. Any subject matter. When he picked up a ruler the teacher told ~~him~~ him that he couldn't use it because a ruler is a restriction!

The question of structure and limits, etc. is difficult to explain, and it's hard to really know beforehand whether a potential volunteer staff member really understands what we're trying to do at KP. Our current screening sys. doesn't seem to be adequate. How can you tell in an interview whether a person has her life together enough to be an effective teacher? The follow-up also isn't working as well as I had envisioned. I think the problem has to do with consistency, and that has to do with having the time to be consistent. Each of us has too many roles to perform and so some of these roles tend to suffer.

1976

3/12 We all went to see "Battle of Algiers" today. They all sat through it even though there were subtitles, etc. On the way back to Greenfield they were asking questions about Algerian history, etc. Many really are interested in these kinds of things and when given the chance are eager to ~~try~~ learn and understand more, ~~etc~~. They seemed to have a good basic feeling (understanding too) for oppression, but have trouble articulating it. (They were turned on in the same way when we had the slide shows from Cuba, & from China, and even more so when we showed the film on Attica.)

1976

5/11 **Jane** was supposed to do a current events report on North America from the newspaper. Her report was on stabbings in Dorchester, Mass.

Again today we were working out a strategy for changing the board structure. The staff was clearly feeling despairing about the whole situation. Again it feels as if the amount of energy, etc. it takes to fight the board will distract the school. We're tired of their petty power plays + control trips. At our mtg. after school I guess the ~~st~~ students were picking up on our feelings + in their own way ~~making~~ trying to make us feel better.

Betty said, "If it wasn't for K-P none of us would be here"

Tom said, "I'd be in jail."

Robin said, "I'd be camping on top of Mt. Grace"

Liz said, "I'd be on the road."